

**UNDERSTANDING THE RELIGIOUS NATURE OF TERRORISM IN INDIA: FOUR
CASE STUDIES WITH AN ANALYSIS FOR PROPOSALS AND RESOLUTION**

BY

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ABSTRACT

India has faced the challenge of religious terrorism for almost three decades. This phenomenon – in spite of the Indian government's comprehensive effort to contain it – has been spreading its vicious influence and expanding its support base among the conflicting religious communities in many parts of the country. The existing views, in regard to the rise of religious terrorism, suggest that economic, socio-political or geo-political issues (that cropped up during the post-partition period) are responsible for the birth of the problem. However, so far no study is done collectively on the four (Sikh, Kashmiri Muslim, Hindu and Naga Christian) religious communities to explain the cause of the problem. Therefore, this thesis studies these four religious traditions together to further investigate the main cause of this problem. In this regard the first six chapters examine: the historical background of religious antagonism and religious ideological basis (religious texts and symbols); the significance of religion in the Indian society and the relationship between the sacred and secular; the effects of the partition of India and socio-political developments (following the partition till the late 1970s) on the aggravation of the communal problem; and the impact of the worldwide religious resurgence on galvanization of religious and ethno-religious nationalism, communalism and religious violence. In doing so the thesis argues that, in contrast to the existing explanations, religion (religious ideologies) and historical and socio-political factors are intensely interconnected for the rise of the problem. Finally, the thesis proposes that rebuilding of the communal harmony, by utilising the interconnecting social threads of the coexisting sections of the Indian society, is essential for the deconstruction of the religious terror in India.

THIS THESIS IS DEDICATED
TO
MY DEAR WIFE
ASHA CHATRY
AND
MY THREE LOVELY DAUGHTERS
ZIM ROSHNI CHATRY
RESHMA CHATRY
RANAJANA CHATRY

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TABLE OF CONTENT

	<u>Page No.</u>
AN OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH:	1 - 14
Introduction	1
The Research Problem	5
The Research Questions	8
Scope of the Research	9
Methodology	10
Sources of Research	14
INTRODUCTION:	15–41
1. Disproportionate Religious Demography	15
2. Religiosity of the Indian Society	16
3. Secularization versus Religious Life of the Indian Society	18
4. Religious Reawakening and Rise of Religious Terrorism	20
5. Meaning and Definition of (Religious) Terrorism	26
6. Why and When Religion Sanctions Violence?	34
6.1. Two Dimensions of Religion	35
6.2. Sacred Symbols and Holy Violence	37
7. Importance of This Research	38
8. Arrangement of the Chapters	40
CHAPTER I: RELIGIOUS TERRORISM IN INDIA	42–69
I.1. Introduction	42
I.2. Post-independent Indian State	43
I.3. Secular State and Role of Religion in the Public Life	45

I.4. State Secularism under Congress and BJP Regimes	-----	51
I.4.1. Nehru and His Administrative Policy	-----	52
I.4.2. State Secularism under Indira, Rajiv and Rao	-----	54
I.4.3. BJP Government and State Secularism	-----	59
I.5. Critique of the Secular State	-----	61
I.5.1. Critique by Hindutva Based Organizations	-----	62
I.5.2. Indian State Secularism and Christians, Sikhs and Muslims	-----	64
I.6. An Assessment	-----	66
I.7. Conclusion	-----	68
CHAPTER II: SIKH RELIGIOUS TERRORISM	-----	70–119
II.1. Introduction	-----	70
II.2. Various Theoretical Standpoints on the Rise of the Sikh Terrorism	-----	72
II.2.1. Involvement of External Forces	-----	72
II.2.2. Socio-Economic Aspects Responsible in the Rise of the Problem	-----	73
II.3. Historical Context	-----	75
II.3.1. Guru Nanak and Formation of Sikh Community	-----	75
II.3.2. Transformation of Sikhism: Formation of <i>Khalsa Panth</i>	-----	78
II.3.3. Realization of <i>Khalsa</i> Aspiration	-----	80
II.4. Identity Crisis and Sikh Resurgence after the Collapse of Sikh Empire	-----	82
II.5. Post-1947 Sikh Issues	-----	85

II.5.1. Demand for Punjabi <i>Suba</i> (State)	-----	88
II.5.2. Formation of Punjabi <i>Suba</i>	-----	88
II.6. Socio-Political Issues in Post-1966 Punjab	-----	89
II.6.1. Economic Transformation and Its Negative Effect	-----	91
II.6.2. The <i>Akali</i> 's New Strategy: Anandpur Sahib Resolution	-----	92
II. 6.3. Launching of <i>Dharm Yudh</i> (Righteous War)	-----	93
II.7. The Rise of Sikh Religious Terrorism in Punjab	-----	95
II.7.1. Sikh Resurgence	-----	95
II.7.1.1. Change of Course of the Sikh Resurgence	-----	98
II.7.1.2. Bhindranwale's Authority	-----	100
II.7.1.3. Bhindranwale's Entry into National Limelight	-----	101
II.7.1.4. Bhindranwale's Theology	-----	102
II.8. Terrorist Violence during pre-Blue-Star Phase	-----	106
II.9. Post-Blue Star Terrorism	-----	109
II.9.1. The <i>Babbar Khalsa</i>	-----	111
II.9.2. Transformation of Terrorism in the Post-Blue Star Phase	-----	114
II.10. Sikh Religious Terrorism: An Assessment	-----	115
II.11. Conclusion	-----	117
CHAPTER III: ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS TERRORISM	-----	120–167
III.1. Introduction	-----	120
III.2. Beginning, Aim and Objective of the Kashmiri Militant Movement	-----	121
III.3. What prompted the rise of the Kashmiri Militancy in the late 1980s?	-----	124

III.3.1. Disintegration of the Traditional Bond of <i>Kashmiriyat</i> -----	125
III.3.2. Assertions of Religious, Ethnic and Secular nationalism -----	127
III.3.3. Breakdown of the Original Relationship between the Centre and the State of Jammu and Kashmir -----	129
III.3.4. Re-eruption of the Problem left Unsolved in 1947 -----	131
III.3.5. Hindu Organisations, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi were Accountable for the Crisis -----	132
III.3.6. Political Mobilization and Institutional Decay -----	134
III.4. Pre-1947 Jammu and Kashmir: Socio-Political Context during the period of <i>Dogra</i> Rule -----	138
III.4.1. Religio-Political Economy of <i>Dogra</i> Regime -----	140
III.4.2. Theological Discourse during the <i>Dogra</i> Period -----	142
III.4.3. Muslim Uprising in Jammu and Kashmir in 1931 -----	145
III.5. Post-1947 Jammu and Kashmir: Betrayals and Broken Promises -----	148
III.5.1. Why There was no Insurgency before 1988? -----	151
III.5.2. Islamic Theological Ideologies in the Rise of Terrorism in Kashmir -----	155
III.6. Islamic Terrorist Groups: <i>Lashkar-e-Taiba</i> and Its Ideology -----	158
III.7. Towards a Solution -----	161
III.8. Outline of the Contributions in this Chapter -----	162
III.9. Conclusion -----	167

CHAPTER IV: HINDU RELIGIOUS TERRORISM	-----	168–218
IV.1. Introduction	-----	168
IV.2. Scholars’ Arguments	-----	170
IV.2.1. Political and Economic Dimension – Erosion of Political Order and Authority	-----	171
IV.2.2. Communal Violence is Caused by Western Ideas	-----	173
IV.2.3. Religious Violence: By-Product of Globalization	-----	175
IV.2.4. Hindu Religious Ideologies, Historical Context and Socio-Political Environment are Accountable for the Emergence of Hindu Religious Extremism/Terrorism	-----	177
IV.3. Modern Hindu Socio-Religious Reformation Movements	-----	179
IV.3.1. The <i>Brahma Samaj</i> : Towards Assertion of Hinduism as Universal Religion	-----	181
IV.3.2. The <i>Arya Samaj</i> : Re-establishment of the Vedic Golden Age	-----	182
IV.3.3. Cow Protection Movement for Hindu Unity	-----	184
IV.4. Emergence of Militant Hindu Organisations during the early Twentieth Century	-----	186
IV.4.1. All India Hindu <i>Mahasabha</i> – A Religio-Political Platform for Hindu Unity	-----	187
IV.4.2. The RSS and Its Militant <i>Hindutva</i> Ideology	-----	192
IV.5. Post-1947 Hindu Religious Organisation: The <i>Vishwa Hindu Parishad</i> (VHP) and Its Modus Operandi to Create Religious Violence	-----	196

IV.5.1. Religio-Political Schemes towards Creation of		
Religious Violence	-----	200
IV.5.1.1. <i>Ekmata Yajna</i> : Unity for Hindu Divinity	-----	200
IV.5.1.2. <i>Rath Yatra</i> : Re-enactment of Mythical Battles between		
<i>Dharma</i> and <i>Adharma</i> (Good and Evil)	-----	201
IV.5.1.3. <i>Ramjanmabhoomi</i> : Re-establishment of		
Conceived or Mythical Hindu Golden Age	-----	203
IV.5.2. Hindu Extremist Groups and Their Terrorist Activities	----	205
IV.5.2.1. Gujarat Genocide: “Fire for Fire”	-----	206
IV.5.2.2. Violence against Christians in Orissa: Design to		
Eliminate Religious Minority	-----	209
IV.5.2.3. Strategy of Hindu Religious Terrorism: “Bomb for Bomb”	-----	212
IV.6. An Analysis of Hindu Religious Terrorism	-----	214
IV.7. Conclusion	-----	216
CHAPTER V: NAGA INSURGENCY	-----	219–265
V.1. Introduction	-----	219
V.2. Scholars Viewpoints on the Rise of the Naga Insurgency	----	220
V.2.1. British Administrative Policy Caused the Naga Problem	----	221
V.2.2. Christian Missionaries and Foreign Forces Caused the Conflict	---	224
V.2.3. Economic Underdevelopment and Political Negligence	-----	228
V.2.4. Fear of Losing Ethno-cultural Identity	-----	231
V.3. Ethno-Religious Apprehension, Historical and Political		
Contexts gave rise to the Naga Conflict	-----	235
V.4. The Nagas: Meaning of Term “Naga”	-----	235

V.4.1. The Nagas: Historical Background	-----	236
V.4.2. British Occupation and Nagas' State of Affairs	-----	243
V.4.3. Role of Christianity in Collective Naga Identity	-----	246
V.5. Ethno-religious Apprehension and Aspiration for Independence	-----	249
V.6. Policy of the Indian State	-----	253
V.7. Naga Militancy	-----	257
V.8. Naga Militancy: An Assessment	-----	259
V.9. Solution toward the Conflict Resolution	-----	262
V.10. Conclusion	-----	263
CHAPTER VI: COMPARATIVE REFLECTION ON RELIGIOUS TERRORISM IN INDIA	-----	266-284
VI.1. Introduction	-----	266
VI.2. Interconnection between Sacred and Secular	-----	267
VI.3. Common Ideological Component	-----	270
VI.4. Religious Nationalism	-----	272
VI.5. Ethno-Religious-Nationalist Conflict	-----	274
VI.6. Religious Concept and Techniques of Religious Terrorism	-----	279
VI.7. Conclusion	-----	282
CHAPTER VII: DECONSTRUCTING RELIGIOUS TERROR: TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR RECONCILIATION AND RESOLUTION	-----	285-308
VII.1. Introduction	-----	285
VII.2. Summary of the Issues	-----	286
VII.3. Framework towards Conflict Resolution	-----	295

VII.3.1. Is Religious Plurality a Weakness or		
Strength of the Indian Society?	-----	297
VII.3.2. Interconnecting Socio-Religious Threads for		
Deconstruction of Religious Terror and		
Rebuilding of Social Harmony	-----	399
VII.4. Framework for Reconciliation and Resolution	-----	306
VII.5. Conclusion	-----	307
CONCLUSION	-----	309-312
APPENDICES	-----	I - IX
REFERENCES	-----	i - xxix

AN OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

Introduction

For many centuries India has been the abode of the people of diverse religious cultures and traditions; and both persecuted (Persians or Zoroastrians) and persecutors (Muslims) found home in this land. Religious plurality seems to have strengthened (in the past) each religious community within the plurality – this might be the reason why most of the existing religious communities in the Indian society could preserve their original and unique religious values and norms intact up to the present time.¹ Moreover, until the middle of the nineteenth century there appeared to be no incidence of serious communal problem that would divide the Indian society in the communal line and would give rise to religious conflict. However, from the 1870s Hindu socio-religious movements (mainly the *Arya Samaj*) began to provoke Hindus against the Muslims, Christians and Sikhs by organizing the cow protection societies and by introducing *Suddhi* (purification-ritual) and *Sangathan* (organization) systems – to reconvert those Hindus who became Christian, Muslim or Sikh, and to cultivate a militant spirit, manliness and self-respect among the Hindus.² At the same time, the Sikh religious community started the *Singh Sabha* movement to defend Sikhism from the *Arya Samaj* and Christian missionaries. Apparently, owing to the activities of the Hindu and the Sikh socio-religious organizations, religious resentment began, mainly between Hindu and Muslim/Christian/Sikh communities.

The religious hostility that germinated in the nineteenth century appeared to have deepened from the early twentieth century mainly due to the demand for separate electorates for the

¹ See Maurice Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda: The Ancient Religion of India* (London: Adamant Media Corporation, 2005), 10f.

² See John Zavos, *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 91.

Muslims (which generated fear among the Hindus that the minorities might indulge in separatism),³ mobilization of masculine/aggressive form of Hinduism against the minorities (particularly Muslims) and reconstructed Hindu history that projected the Hindu culture and civilization as superior to all other cultures and civilizations.⁴ Within the first quarter of the twentieth century several other religio-political organizations – such as the Muslim League (founded in 1906), the *Hindu Mahasabha* (1915), the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS – founded in 1925), the *Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak* Committee (SGPC – 1920) and the *Shiromani Akali Dal* (SAD – 1920) – came into existence and some of these organizations incited communalism and communal violence in several parts of India. In the meantime, Hindu-Muslim communal division became obvious in the Kashmiri society from the early 1930s due to the oppressive Dogra rule, the influence of radical Islamic religious ideologies propagated by puritanical theologians⁵ and the incidence of Muslim riots in Jammu and Kashmir in 1931. The Hindu-Muslim religious hostility gradually spread in many parts of the British India, and this could be one of the major concerns that became the cause of the partition of India in 1947.

Meanwhile, from the late 1920s the Nagas had perceived an impending danger to their collective ethno-religious identity and their freedom when they learned that the British were planning to make a series of political reforms in India in view of the rising anti-colonial

³ See Christophe Jaffrelot, “Hindu nationalism, Strategic Syncretism in Ideology Building,” Paper prepared for presentation at the Conference of the British Association for South Asian Studies, (Birmingham: 10-12 April, 1992), 12.

⁴ See Herald Fischer-Tini, “Inventing a National Past: The Case of Ramdev’s *Bharatvars Ka Itihas* (1910-14),” in *Hinduism in Public and Private: Reform, Hindutva, Gender and Sampraday*, edited by Antony Copley (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 112.

⁵ See Chitralekha Zutshi, *Language of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity, and the Making of Kashmir* (London: Hurst & Company, 2004), 133.

mobilization. Therefore, in 1929 the Naga Club submitted a memorandum⁶ demanding their land be excluded from the proposed reform scheme and be kept under direct British administration; and to give them freedom (or revert to their earlier status) when the British would leave India.⁷ However, the second aspiration of the Nagas was not fulfilled; instead their territory was made a part (as an autonomous district) of the state of Assam when India got independence. Hence, the political outcome, after the British left India, further strengthened the above-mentioned apprehension of the Nagas.

Furthermore, the socio-religious fears and concerns that evolved in the pre-independent era began to intensify in the post-independent period due to various unfavourable (to Hindu, Sikh, Kashmiri Muslim and Naga Christian communities) socio-political happenings – such as minorities’ movements for geo-political and linguistic demands, failure of the religio-nationalist Hindus to make India a Hindu state, granting of equal religious rights and privileges to the minorities in the Indian Constitution, assertion of the majoritarian right of the Hindus and military repressive measures of the Indian state to suppress minorities concerns and demands. Seemingly these events reinforced the communal division between the Hindu majority and the given minority religious communities, and further promoted communal conflict or violence. However, until the 1970s the communal problem – in spite of occurrence of communal violence (occasionally) in various parts of the country – did not take the form of religious terror; most probably, because of the strong Congress (secular) government in the Centre and, at the same time, religion was not used by secular political parties/leaders for their political goal. Nevertheless, from the late 1970s detrimental

⁶ See Sanjiv Baruah, “Confronting Constructionism: Ending India’s Naga War,” in *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (May, 2003), 328.

⁷ See Neville Maxwell, *India and the Nagas*, Report No. 17 (London: Minority Rights Group, 1973), 7.

communal and political developments began to take place due to the decline of the popularity of the Congress Party and the occurrence of religious reawakening in many parts of the world – particularly Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. From this time leaders of the secular parties (mainly the Congress Party) started to manage religion for their political gain, on the one hand, and an unrestrained communalisation of politics (e.g. Hindu nationalist political parties – mainly the *Bharatiya Janata Party* – promoted Hindu communal agenda [particularly *Hindutva*/Hinduness ideology] for their political gain, and threatened to undermine the Indian secular democracy by attempting to do away with the constitutional rights and privileges of religious minorities granted in the Indian Constitution) and politicization of religion (e.g. religious symbols – such as *Ramjanmabhoomi*, Babri Mosque and weapons of gods – were mobilized to achieve political goal) began in full force, on the other. Thenceforth, religious specialists and religio-nationalist or ethno-religio-nationalist actors of the conflicting religious communities, to achieve their religio-political objectives, started to devise radical religious ideologies (basing on the select religious teachings and symbols, such as *miri* (spiritual) and *piri* (temporal), five Sikh symbols, battle between good and evil mentioned in *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* and *jihad*/religious war) to motivate and mobilize the concerned religious constituency/constituencies for brutal form of religious violence against the perceived enemies. Thus, from the early 1980s modern religious terrorism – Sikh religious terrorism, Islamic religious terrorism in Kashmir and Hindu religious extremism/terrorism – took birth in the Indian soil and, since then, its number (number of terrorist groups or organizations – such as, *Dashmesh Regiment*, *Babbar Khalsa*, Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, *Bajrang Dal* and *Abhinav Bharat*) and capability (capability to strike any target in any part of India) have grown rapidly. Although the Indian state has been (from the very beginning) trying to defeat this force with the use of military and

political tactics, this phenomenon has been persistently expanding its support base and activities. This violent force poses a grave threat to the existing socio-political system of the Indian nation and society. Therefore, an enhanced knowledge of the cause of the rise of religious terrorism in India is indispensable to find a suitable and practicable solution to contain the problem.

Hence, this thesis will attempt to present better understanding of the emergence of religious terrorism in India by critically analysing how important religion is to the given societies and in what way religious ideologies and symbols could be manipulated by religious authorities to legitimize religious violence of extreme form. Further, this research will investigate how intensely historical and socio-political contexts and religion are interconnected to explain how and why the given four traditions could possibly give rise to the problem. In the meantime, the study intends to fill the gap left in the discourse of religious terrorism in India.

The Research Problem

Although numerous studies have been done by various scholars on Sikh militancy, Kashmiri militancy, Naga insurgency and Hindu communalism or communal violence, so far no study is done collectively and uniformly on all four religious traditions to explain the cause of religious terrorism in India. In the meantime, the existing scholarly arguments are based on the socio-economic and political issues and developments of the post-independent period. Besides, importance of religion and religious ideologies has not been given a sufficient amount of consideration in the discourse for the rise of these militancy/insurgency movements. The rising trend of communal conflicts in India, according to Atul Kohli, is due to political problems, mainly disintegration and decline of major political institutions of

India.⁸ J. W. Bjorkman and his colleagues/co-authors contend that socio-political factors are involved in giving rise to communal/religious violence in South Asia. “Socio-political truths,” they argue, are veiled or hidden by invocation of “fundamentalism”⁹ and religious “revivals;”¹⁰ – i.e. mainly for political purposes religion and religious imageries are frequently used (by social and political elites) in India.¹¹ Likewise, Joyce Pettigrew, Sumit

⁸ Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability*, reprint (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁹ According to Robert Frykenberg, “the terms ‘fundamentalist’ and ‘fundamentalism’ came from the name for a series of books which were published [between 1910 to 1915] in defence of ‘the faith.’ These works constituted an attack upon what were considered to be the excesses and foibles of higher criticism (upon Scripture), of modern science (in evolutionism and scientism), and of ‘liberal’ or anti-theistic theology. The books condemned any public practice or preaching which might be seen as a hidden danger or an overt threat to that popular American culture which was by then so often described as ‘the faith once delivered to the saints,’ a phrase lifted out of the Epistle of Jude (1:3), the context of the which was warning for believers to beware of apostasy, an exhortation for them to ‘earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints’ [...] The concept has served ever since as a neat, although somewhat simplistic instrument of social analysis. Indeed, in the course of time, the term has come into common (and even popular) usage. It has been applied more generally to other social phenomena and to ideological, political, religious, or social movements in every corner of the world. As such, the term itself has become widely if inexactly used for assessing, naming, and measuring all sorts of movements [...] Just as fascinating is the relationship of this term to that of revivalism, a concept which also has roots in radical conversion movements and in their periodic ... reawakening.” Robert Eric Frykenberg, “Fundamentalism and Revivalism in South Asia,” in *Fundamentalism, Revivalists and Violence in South Asia*, edited by James Warner Bjorkman (Riverdale: The Riverdale Company, 1988), 21 & 22.

¹⁰ “The origin of the term [revival] and its use in modern times can be traced back into the evangelical ‘revivals’ of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. From these came the Great Awakening in America, the Evangelical Awakening in Britain, and the Methodist revivals which periodically thereafter have swept various parts of the English-speaking (and European) world – and which still continue so to do.” Frykenberg, “Fundamentalism and Revivalism in South Asia,” 22; also see F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: Brill, 1965); F. Ernest Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1973). During the late eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, under the label of Hinduism, there emerged “an almost entirely new religious system within the context of indigenous cultures” in India. According to Frykenberg, “Perhaps the earliest glimmerings of what may be called ‘Hindu fundamentalism’ are those which were stimulated by fundamentalistic missionaries at Serempore. It is this kind of phenomena, as epitomized in such terms as ‘*Arya Dharm*’ and ‘*Sanathana Dharm*’ and as organized by such fundamentalist movements and parties as the Vibuthi Sanga, the Arya Samaj, the Nagari Pracharini Sabha, the Hindu Mahasabha, and the Rashriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and the Jana Sangh In Similar fashion, the explosive new forms of ... Sikhism, and Islam which have arisen in South Asia ... as epitomized in such revitalized agencies as the ... *Singh Sabha* ..., and the *Jama'at-i-Islami*” Frykenberg, “Fundamentalism and Revivalism in South Asia,” 27.

¹¹ “Except for Jawaharlal Nehru, most of the pre-eminent leaders of the independence movements in India ... maintained prominent religious profiles in public and made frequent use of religious imagery [...] for political ends. Unfortunately, such public displays of religious faith produced divisive as well as integrative results. Fears of domination, submergence, and assimilation appeared; and charges of obstinacy, self-centerdness, and exploitation were heard. In the pre-British era, politicians ... have succumbed to the easy alternative of mobilizing support along religious lines and have thoroughly mixed religion and politics. Whereas political leaders during the pre-independence era had usually used religious imagery and metaphors only to establish rapport with the masses, their post-independence successors have regularly used religion to rouse communal passions and thereby bargain with other centers of political power.” James Warner Bjorkman, “The Dark Side of

Ganguly, Ashutosh Varshney, Maya Chadda, Reeta Chowdhari Trembley, Riyaz Punjabi, Ashis Nandy, T. N. Madan and host of other scholars take into account socio-economic issues, geo-political factors, ethnic-nationalism, Hindu nationalism and identity issues to explain the rise of militancy/insurgency or occurrence of communal problem in India.¹² In all the above arguments the relationship between religion and the given religious communities in India is not explored deeply. Religion is, rather, seen as a mask that is used to conceal social, political or economic motives. Moreover, most of the scholars seem to have a tendency to categorize any form of Hindu religious violence against minorities as communal conflict or riot.

Therefore, this thesis (for the first time) makes an effort to study the four religious traditions together to further investigate the main motivating cause/causes for the rise and persistence of religious terrorism in India. The main argument of the thesis, in contrast to the existing standpoints, is that religion and religious ideologies, (reconstructed and factual) historical contexts, socio-political grievances and experiences are proficiently fused together by religious and religio-nationalist leaders for motivation and mobilization of the conflicting religious constituencies for religious terrorism, with an aim of attaining their religious and political goals (i.e. Hindu religio-nationalists aim to convert India into a Hindu *Rashtra*/nation, which will be ruled by Hindu religious principles; Sikh religio-nationalists

the Force: Notes on Religion and Politics,” in Bjorkman (ed.), *Fundamentalism, Revivalists and Violence in South Asia*, 10 & 11.

¹² See Joyce J.M. Pettigrew, *The Sikhs of the Punjab: Unheard Voices of State and Guerrilla Violence* (London: Ned Books Ltd., 1995); Peter Van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Gurharpal Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India: A Case Study of Punjab* (New York: Palgrave, 2000); Paul R. Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003); Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999); Raju G. C. Thomas (ed.), *Perspectives on Kashmir: The Roots of Conflict in South Asia* (Boulder: Westview, 1992); V. Das (ed.), *Mirrors of Violence, Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia* (Delhi: 1990); S. Kaviraj (ed.), *Politics in India* (New Delhi: 1997); B. B. Kumar (ed.), *The Problems of Ethnicity in the North-East India* (Delhi: Astha Bharati, 2007); R. Gopalakrishnan, *Insurgent Northeastern Region of India* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1996).

attempt to establish an independent Sikh homeland or *Khalistan*, which will be governed by *Khalsa* Sikh norms; and Kashmiri Muslim religio-nationalists seek to separate Kashmir from India and establish Islamic law in the united Kashmir).

The Research Questions

There are two sets of questions – primary and secondary – that have to be taken into consideration in this research. Following are the primary questions. Do Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam and Christianity justify violence? Why and when do these religions sanction holy/religious war? On what basis are radical religious ideologies formulated by radical religious actors of these religious traditions to motivate and mobilize their concerned religious constituencies for religious violence/terrorism? What is/are the main objective/objectives of religious terrorism in India? What is the role of communalism and communal conflict in the rise of the problem? Though India has been experiencing violence of various types, for the last thirty years it has been struggling with religious terrorism that is threatening to divide the Indian society politically on religious lines. Is there any possibility for the Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian religious traditions to work together for a stronger secular India in which all people can practice the religion of their own choice without any restriction and where people will feel secure?

The secondary questions are as follows. How does the Indian state manage communal and religious problems? Sometimes due to the lack of the central government's attention (or indifference) a religio-political grievance might take a serious turn and erupt in the form of a religious violence. How does the Indian government respond to such volatile situations? Is there any possibility that a ruling political party in the Centre could create a rift or further

widen an already existing gap between majority and minority communities for the party's political gain?

Scope of the Research

The research will be focused on the study of religious terrorism in the four major religious traditions – Sikhism, Islam, Hinduism and Christianity – in India. Although India is the home of multi-religious traditions, seemingly only the above-mentioned four religious traditions have so far nurtured religious insurgency/extremism/terrorism that has been seriously challenging the socio-political integrity of the Indian state since the early 1980s. Sikh religious terrorism rocked Punjab and some other North Indian states from the early 1980s until it was crushed by the Indian military force in 1993. However, there remain a handful of Sikh terrorist groups – among them the Babar Khalsa International (BKI) is the prominent one, which could rise as a potential threat to the Indian state in near future. Islamic terrorism took birth in Kashmir in the late 1980s. Since then this terrorism has been accounted for several destructive and violent acts in many parts of India. Ethno-Christian militancy began in North-east India, particularly in Nagaland and Mizoram states, from the early 1950s and 1960s. But, the first extremist group (known as National Council of Nagaland [NCN] – which began guerrilla activities in Nagaland in 1956) of Nagaland and the Mizo National Front (MNF) signed peace Accord with the central government in the 1970s and in the 1980s respectively and gave up their extremist movement.¹³ However, in the early 1980s a fraction of the Naga extremists who were against the peace treaty (known as Shillong Accord) formed two extremist groups – National Socialist Council of Nagaland ([NSCN] Isak-Moivah) and National Socialist Council of Nagaland ([NSCN] Khaplang). They are well organised, well trained and well equipped extremist groups in the North-east India. Presently NSCN (Isak-

¹³ See Jyotirindra Dasgupta, "Community, Authenticity, and Autonomy: Insurgency and Institutional Development in India's Northeast", in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 56, no. 2 (May, 1997), 367.

Moivah) and NSCN (Khaplang) groups are in ceasefire agreement with the Indian government. Besides the above-stated extremist/terrorist groups there are other religious terrorist organisations which are nurtured by Hindu religious tradition. The Hindu terrorist organizations mainly kill or terrorise the members of Muslim and Christian minority religious communities in the Hindu dominated regions.

Methodology

Historical and Sociological methods with a theological approach will be applied to do the research. These methods – without referring to any specific historical method or social method or theological approach – will be used in broader/general sense to identify historical, social and theological factors that inform religious related violence/terrorism in India.

Historical method, firstly, will study the historical background of: the Sikh religious symbols (for example, *miri-piri*, institution of *Khalsa* Community and the five Sikh symbols) on the basis of which radical religious ideology could be formulated to justify religious war against the conceived enemies of the Sikhs; the modern Sikh religious movements (the *Singh Sabha* and the *Gurdwara* reformation movements) to assess the Sikh ethno-religious identity concerns, the Sikh religious and socio-political grievances and bitterness (during the pre-independent era) that could have caused communal cleavage between the Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab; and the post-partition period Sikh socio-religious, linguistic and geo-political issues and demands to understand why radicalised Sikhs could have perceived the Hindus as enemies of the Sikh faith and Sikh community. Secondly, this method will help to trace back the root of the present Kashmir problem. In relation to this it will review: the socio-political and religio-cultural state of the Kashmiri Muslims during the Dogra period; entry and influence of puritanical Islamic theological ideologies from the early twentieth century; the

Muslim uprising in the Kashmir Valley in 1931; the partition of Kashmir and the betrayal of the Kashmiri people by their last Hindu Maharajah; and socio-political developments in the post-independent India. Thirdly, it will study the modern Hindu socio-religious and religio-nationalist movements, their religio-nationalist ideology, their anti-minority activities and ground of their religio-nationalist ideology. This will help us to determine when Hindu religious hostility against the given minorities took birth and how this antagonism gradually intensified in the later period and took the form of religious violence/terrorism. Lastly, historical factors will assist to establish the fact that the Nagas' ethno-religious identity and their freedom have been the main concerns that led to the present crisis in Nagaland. In this regard the historical background of the Nagas and their geo-political territory, construction of their modern collective ethno-religious identity, their ethno-religious and political apprehension before and after the Indian independence and political happenings in the post-independent period will be assessed. Hence, historical method will make an attempt to trace the historical sources of: socio-religious resentments (of the conflicting communities); and the religious ideologies that motivate religious violence/terrorism in the present time.

In addition to the historical context we have to study the importance and function of religion in the present Sikh, Muslim, Hindu and Christian societies to understand how certain religious ideologies and symbols could influence or impact the life of an individual member of these societies. At the same time, we have to critically analyse whether and how the given historical context could be exploited by radical religious leaders and preachers of the Sikh, Kashmiri Muslim, Hindu and Naga Christian religious societies for the motivation of religious violence/terrorism or insurgency.

Therefore, sociological method will study: the relationship between religion and the Sikh, Muslim, Hindu and Christian societies, and the function of religion in shaping and developing the culture of love and hatred in these religious communities; how religion provides the basis of coherence and the sense of identity to these communities; in what way religious (both sacred and profane) symbols function as binding force to bind all individuals as one body within the community; on what ground communal division is created between “us” and “others”. Furthermore, it will investigate how some of the religious symbols could be stage-managed (by religious or religio-nationalist actors) to instigate and mobilize the given societies for communal violence/riots and religious terrorism.

Besides historical and sociological methods, theological approach is essential in the study of religious terrorism in India. Theological approach is an integral approach to the study of religion and religious experience of a given community. In theological approach emphasis is laid on the essential object of a given faith – Allah/Guru/God (*theos*), which is the centre and unity of theological debate,¹⁴ and a given religious community’s perception-of and constant relationship-with this essential entity. In the meantime, this approach analyses religious (both bitter and cherished) experiences in relation to socio-economic and political experiences undergone by each of the conflicting religious community in its history (both factual and perceived history). Furthermore, theological approach investigates the significance of values and meanings/interpretations of certain religious texts and symbols (of a given religious tradition) that could be used to justify religious violence and terrorism in a given socio-political context.

¹⁴ See W. Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1976), 300.

In the modern days the main focus of radical preachers and teachers of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian religious community is “our experience” (i.e. experience of the Hindu community during Muslim and British rule; experience of the Muslim, Sikh or Christian community under the Hindu domination) – religious, socio-economic, political and historical. On the basis of the experience/experiences, selected religious texts and symbols are interpreted to seek/attain ethno-religious and socio-political justice/goals. That is, these religious leaders or preachers believe that what they express is justified by the socio-political and historical contexts, therefore, their religious confession and religious interpretations are absolutely valid. In this regard the theology becomes “contextual” or “confessional” theology – basing on the concrete experience of the religious or ethno-religious community, and might “override any cross-historical or cross-cultural principles.”¹⁵ This contextual or confessional theology could be responsible factor in giving birth to religious violence or terrorism in India.

In India, in the four religious traditions in particular, we have to seriously take into account the function of religious leaders, and the propensity of radical religious specialists to exploit certain religious texts and symbols to justify religious violence for religious or religio-political goals. In this regard the religious specialists may interpret certain select texts or symbols to suit their religio-political purposes. In the meantime, they might make use of the given religious society’s socio-economic and religio-political unfavourable experiences of the past and present (under other religio-political community/communities) in support of their interpretations or religious expressions. Moreover, these religious interpretations or meanings could be claimed as Divine/God (*theos*) inspired, therefore, they are authoritative and obligatory. Hence, the selected religious texts and symbols could be managed for the

¹⁵ Max L. Stackhouse, “Torture, Terrorism and Theology: The Need for a Universal Ethic,” in Return to Religion- Online (October 8, 1986) [Article online]; available from <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=117>; Internet accessed: 2 March 2011.

development of imposing religious ideology/ideologies for socio-cultural, economic or religio-political purposes. Therefore, theological approach is essential to study how religious texts and symbols are manipulated to devise radical religious ideologies for justification religious violence/terrorism.

Sources of Research

Mostly the printed materials, primary and secondary, will be utilized for the research. The following libraries will be accessed to find books and journals: Birmingham University Libraries, National Library of Wales, Cambridge University Library, British Library, Oxford Indian Institute library and Oxford Bodleian Library. Library Websites will be used to get articles, etc. Also national libraries in Delhi, Kolkata and Guwahati may be accessed to obtain materials.

INTRODUCTION

1. Disproportionate Religious Demography

India is the home of 1.21 billion people, or about 17% of the total population of the world.¹ Moreover, it is the birth place of four of the world religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism; and abode of one of the world's largest Muslim populations, a significant Christian minority and several tribal religious (animist) groups. However, the religious diversity, in India, is hugely unbalanced – according to the 2001 census, more than four-fifth (80.5%) of the total population is Hindu, 13.4% Muslim, 2.3% Christian, 1.9% Sikh and less than 2% others (Buddhist, Jain, and tribal and other religious groups).² Hindus are numerous in all states and Union Territories, except Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), Punjab, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Lakshadweep.³ Muslims are dominant majority in J&K (66.97% - whereas more than 95% of the population of the Kashmir Valley is Muslim) and Lakshadweep (95.47%); more than four-fifth of the total population of Nagaland (89.97%) and Mizoram (86.97%), and two-third of Meghalaya (70.25%) is Christian;⁴ Sikhs make up approximately 61% of the total population of the Punjab.⁵ Except some variation in

¹ Matt Rosenberg, "India's Population," in *Geography* (1 April, 2011), available from <http://geography.about.com/od/obtainpopulationdata/a/indiapopulation.htm>; Internet accessed: 06/05/2012; "Indian Census: Population goes up to 1.21 bn," in *News South Asia* (31 March, 2011), available from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12916888>; Internet accessed: 07/05/2012.

² See http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/India_at_glance/religion.aspx; Internet accessed: 03/05/2012.

³ Available from <http://censusindia.gov.in/Census-And-You/religion.aspx>; Internet accessed: 03/05/2012.

⁴ See "India Census 2001 – State Wise Religious Demography," (Tuesday, 26 December 2006), available from http://www.crusadewatch.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=580&Hemid=27; Internet accessed: 03/05/2012.

⁵ See "The Largest Sikh Communities," [Internet Article], available from http://www.adherents.com/largecom/com_sikh.html; Internet accessed: 03/05/2012.

percentage,⁶ such disproportionate religious demography (without considering the region wise religious demography) has been a continuous phenomenon for a long period of time.

2. Religiosity of the Indian Society

Meanwhile, the Indian society is deeply religious;⁷ religiosity of the Indian society can be frequently noticed in both private and public realms.⁸ Temples, mosques, gurdwaras and churches (particularly in Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya and southern states) are filled with devotees in every religious service or occasion; any activity whether religious or secular (such as educational, political, economic and agricultural undertakings, and matters related to employment) are initiated with religious rites, rituals or prayers; celebration of a success is commenced with religious performances or prayers;⁹ political leaders and government officials frequently visit gurus, *sadhus* and *babas* (holy men) to seek their blessings;¹⁰

⁶ On Hindu-Muslim demographic difference during the 19th and 20th centuries see R.B. Bhagat and Purujit Praharaj, "Hindu-Muslim Fertility Differentials," in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 40, No.5 (29 Jan. – 4 Feb., 2005) 311-418; K. Balasubramaniam, "Hindu-Muslim Differentials in Fertility and Population Growth in India: Role of Proximate Variables," in *Athavijnana* (26 Sept., 1984), available from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12340174>; Internet accessed: 06/05/2012; A.P Joshi, M.D. Srinivas and J.K. Bajaj, *Religious Demography of India* (Chennai: Centre for Policy Studies, 2005), 9ff.

⁷ "In India religion is a way of life. It is an integral part of the entire Indian culture and permeates every aspect of life." "India – Reflections on Life, Culture, and Religion," internet article, available from <http://www.sights-and-culture.com/India/India-reflections.html>; Internet accessed: 03/05/2012; "Religious practices are central in the life of every Indian" "Indian Culture, Religion and Social Life," [Internet Article – January 14, 2011], available from <http://www.articlesdot.net/all/book-reviews/multicultural/india-culture-religion-social-life.html>; Internet accessed: 03/05/2012; Religious beliefs and practice "have a large impact on the personal lives of most Indians and influence public life on a daily basis." "Religions of India," [Internet Article], available from http://www.photius.com/religion/india_religious_life.html; Internet accessed: 03/05/2012.

⁸ Religious beliefs and practice "have a large impact on the personal lives of most Indians and influence public life on a daily basis." "Religions of India," available from http://www.photius.com/religion/india_religious_life.html; Internet accessed: 03/05/2012.

⁹ See Maurice Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda: The Ancient Religion*, first published in 1908 by G.P. Putnam's Sons (New York: Adamant Media Corporation, 2005), 3.

¹⁰ M.N. Samdani writes, "The line of VVIPs queuing up to prostrate before controversial godman Ramaduta Swamy at his ashram near Chevur village," in Andhra Pradesh. M.N. Samdani reports, "VVIPs come Calling on Controversial Godman," in *The Times of India* (Hyderabad: 9 October 2011), available from http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-10-09/hyderabad/30259784_1_godman-ashram-vvips; Internet accessed: 04/05/2012; "Heads of states, royalty from India and abroad, corporate bigwigs, stalwarts of science, renowned sportsmen and artists" were among the faithful ones of Sathya Sai Baba. K. Prithik, "A Last Tribute to

religious processions or gatherings are organized in almost every local area during important religious festivals (e.g. *Durga Puja*, *Kali Puja*, *Id*, *Muharam*, *Baisakhi*, *Diwali*, Christmas and Easter)¹¹ and the people of the locality or area, with religious passion (exhibited through singing hymns, chanting mantras or magical formulas, playing musical instruments, dancing, etc.), join the procession or gathering often leaving their other important business/jobs;¹² and during these important religious celebrations public places (like streets, clubs, play grounds, river banks, school buildings, bus stations and government office buildings/compounds) are used for religious celebrations. Pilgrimage to holy places (which include birth places of god-men like Rama, Krishna and Buddha; tomb of Muslim saints - like *Dargah* of Pir, in Ajmer; Churches – e.g., St. Mary’s Basilica in Bangalore – that are known for granting miraculous healing and other wishes of the devotees; and birth places of living or dead saints) are important part of religious life of the people, therefore, all known holy places are frequently crowded with devotees from all walks of life. This is why Bloomfield says: “India is the land of religions,” and in no other place the structure or essence of life is “so much impregnated with religious convictions and practices.”¹³ According to Meera Nanda:

Sathya Sai Baba –Peace,” in UNP News (27 April 2011), [internet Article], available from <http://www.unp.me/f46/a-last-tribute-to-sai-baba-peace-149171/>; Internet accessed: 04/05/2012.

¹¹ “Festivals are an intrinsic part of the Indian way of life, a golden thread that runs through its cultural fabric. Given the size of India, the vast diversity of its people, religions, cultures, languages and terrain, it is not surprising that there are a variety of festivals being celebrated all the year round.” “Fairs & Festivals of India,” internet article (3 May, 2012), available from <http://www.visit-india.com/indian-festivals.html>; Internet accessed: 03/05/2012; “Culture, Festivals of India,” internet article, available from <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Culture/Festivals/Festiv.html>, Internet accessed: 3/05/2012; “Festivals of Goa,” available from, <http://www.indiamile.com/india/goa-f23/festival-of-go-a-saints-procession-t160891>, Internet accessed: 03/05/2012; also see Gooptu, “The Urban Poor and Militant Hinduism in Early Twentieth-Century Uttar Pradesh,” in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 31, No 4 (October, 1997),” 879.

¹² For example, famous Bollywood film actors and actresses, and government civil servants participate in *yatras* and gatherings organized by Brahma Kumaris. See Media Wing: Brahma Kumaris (10 February 2010), available from <http://bkmedia.net/news/10feb.htm>; Internet accessed: 04/05/2012; also see “Christmas in India,” in Happywink.Org [Internet Article], available from <http://www.happywink.org/christmas-day/christmas-in-india.html>; Internet accessed: 04/05/2012.

¹³ Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda: The Ancient Religion*, 3.

The demand for religious services – from worship ceremonies at home in public, visits to temples, pilgrimages, etc. – is growing, especially among the urban, educated, and largely Hindu middle classes¹⁴

Moreover, in the Indian society religion is not just a part of life of a person, rather religion is the obligatory or the most important part of life of every individual of the given religious community because he/she is born and brought up in it. Every member of the concerned religious group is expected (rather obliged) to fulfil specified religious duties and responsibilities of the society, because the individual is inseparable part of the whole community. In case anybody disregards his/her religious duties and responsibilities, then, the person can become pariah to his/her family and society. So, even highly educated (such as scientists, medical doctors and engineers) and wealthy people are loyal to their respective religious faiths and responsibilities. The strangest thing about the Indian society, as per the observation of Angela Saini, is that, “these days among those showing the most religious fervour and throwing the most money at temples like Akshardham are smart young Urbanites.”¹⁵ In the view of Sanal Edamaruku, a rationalist,

There seems to have been a spiritual resurgence among India’s youth, making celebrities out of gurus. They are the educated faithful; the temple-going university graduates.¹⁶

3. Secularization versus Religious Life of the Indian Society

Apparently the religiosity of the Indian society was un-effected despite secularist leaders’ attempt to make Indian society a secular one so that religion would be confined to private

¹⁴ Meera Nanda, *The God Market: How Globalization is Making India More Hindu* (Random House Publishers India Private Limited, 2009, 2011), xvi.

¹⁵ Angela Saini, “The God Confusion,” in *New Humanist*, Vol. 126, Issue 2 (March/April, 2011), available from <http://newhumanist.org.uk/2500/the-god-confusion>; Internet accessed: 04/05/2012.

¹⁶ See Angela Saini, “The God Confusion.”

sphere;¹⁷ instead, the process of secularization and rapid modernization might have helped, to a certain extent, religious reawakening in India as in other parts of the world from the late 1970s.¹⁸ In the meantime, although India was made a secular democracy as per the Constitution adopted in 1950, the Indian government could not make a resolute effort, from the very beginning, to wholly separate religion from the state most probably on account of the influence of certain prominent religious-nationalist leaders both from within and outside the Indian National Congress Party¹⁹ (the secular party which governed India without a break till 1977). Nevertheless, from the early 1950s to the first half of the 1970s religion, in a restricted sense, appeared to be a private business (more) than a public affair even though religious-nationalists regularly pressurised the Indian state for the fulfilment of their religio-political demands. During this period communal violence (mainly between Hindus and Muslims), which became one of the major problems for the Indian state from the beginning of its independence, had continued to occur in several parts of India; but those communal conflicts did not take a form of religious terrorism, because the Indian government (under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru and his immediate successors) managed to maintain neutrality on religious matters in spite of the pressure of religious-nationalists. However, the socio-political atmosphere began to change from the second half of the 1970s due to the adverse political developments: decline of the popularity of the Congress Party; and manipulation of religion by the leaders of the secular parties for their political design.²⁰ Owing to the new

¹⁷ “Despite being gloriously nerdy and science-obsessed,” India “remains among the most religious and superstitious country on earth. Atheists still have not managed to crack a double digit proportion of the population” Saini, “The God Confusion.”

¹⁸ See Nanda, *The God Market*, xv.

¹⁹ See B.D.Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Origins and Development of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 5.

²⁰ See Atul Kohli, “Can Democracies Accommodate Ethnic Nationalism? Rise and Decline of Self-Determination Movements in India,” in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 56, no. 2 (May, 1997), 332.

political happenings the Muslim, Sikh and Christian minorities seemed to have lost whatever hopes and expectations they had on the secular Indian state till then; at the same time, relationship gap between the Hindu majority and the minorities was widened further.

4. Religious Reawakening and Rise of Religious Terrorism

Moreover, from the late 1970s there began to flow a strong wave of religious reawakening affecting many parts of the world (for further explanation on religious resurgence see Appendix 1), including India. In spite of predictions of imminent demise of religion by many Western social scientists and intellectuals²¹ – e.g. Auguste Comte,²² Sigmund Freud,²³ Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx, Voltaire,²⁴ Max Muller,²⁵ Sabino Acquaviva²⁶ and Peter Berger,²⁷ the world saw the return of religion to public life. In 1979 the Iranian Islamic Revolution (ref. Appendix 2 for explanation on Islamic Revolution in Iran) took the Western world and secular thinkers by utter surprise forcing them to re-evaluate

²¹ See Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, second edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 4.

²² In the view of Auguste Comte modernization would make humanity leave behind the “theological stage” and new age would dawn in which science of sociology, replacing religion, would be the basis of moral judgments. Rodney Stark, “Secularization, R.I.P.,” in *Sociology of Religion*, vol. 60, no.3 (Autumn, 1999), 250.

²³ Sigmund Freud assured, “this greatest of all neurotic illusions [religion] would die upon the therapist’s couch, they too would be no more specific than ‘soon’.” Stark, “Secularization, R.I.P.”(1999), 250.

²⁴ According to the speculation of Voltaire, the end of religion would come within the next 50 years. Stark, “Secularization, R.I.P.”(1999), 249.

²⁵ Max Muller, in 1878, noted his complain that the most widely read journals of that time would compete with each other almost in every circulation in reporting that the era of religion was past, “that the faith is a hallucination or an infantile disease, that the gods have at last been found out and exploded.” Stark, “Secularization, R.I.P.” (1999), 250.

²⁶ “From the religious point of view, humanity has entered a long night that will become darker and darker with passing of the generations, and of which no end can yet be seen,” wrote Sabino Acquaviva. Quoted in Harvey Cox, *Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theology* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1984), 11.

²⁷ Peter Berger in 1968 “told the *New York Times* that by ‘the 21st century religious believers are likely to be found only in small sects, huddled together to resist a worldwide secular culture’.” Quoted in Stark, “Secularization, R.I.P.” (1999), 59.

“their assumptions concerning the role of religion in the modern world.”²⁸ According to Harvey Cox, it was an age “of religious revival and the return of the sacral” rather than religious decline.²⁹ Since then “religion manifested itself repeatedly in the public realm,” all over the world³⁰ – including India – often to the surprise or consternation to the Western (secular) world and to the delight to Hindu, Muslim and Sikh religious nationalists. In India secularism is receding, as in other parts of the world – according to Nanda, “the ‘gods are back’ in ever greater force in the private and public spheres...”³¹ So, religious revival seems to have boosted the morals of radical religious specialists and religious-nationalist or ethno-religious-nationalist actors and led to the rise of militant Sikh, Hindu and Islamic religious or ethno-religious-nationalism.

Since religion has both peaceful and violent tendencies,³² it has enormous potential for creating and directing both peace and violence; therefore, resurgent religion was exploited by communalists, fundamentalists and extremists in India for the achievement of their set religio-political goal. On the one hand, religion has been very effective in peace building among different ethnic communities or groups of people in various parts of the world, including India

²⁸ Richard T. Antoun and Mary Eliane Hegland, eds., *Religious Resurgence: Contemporary Cases in Islam, Christianity and Judaism*, 1st edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), vii.

²⁹ Harvey Cox, *Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theology* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1984), 20.

³⁰ David Little and Scott Appleby, “A Moment of Opportunity? The Promise of Religious Peacebuilding in an Era of Religious and Ethnic Conflict,” *Religion and Peacebuilding*, edited by Harold and Gordon Smith (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 1.

³¹ Nanda, *The God Market*, xv.

³² Jonathon Fox, “Towards a Dynamic Theory of Ethno-Religious Conflict,” in *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1999), 433.

– for example, in Northeast India,³³ Mozambique, South Africa and Rwanda church organizations, religious leaders and religious practitioners contributed significantly toward peace building during and after ethnic conflicts and civil wars;³⁴ on the other, religion has been used to justify all forms of religious violence against perceived enemies, particularly by Hindu, Islamic and Sikh religious extremists, therefore, there has been increase of religious violence in India from the time religion manifested its come back in the public arena.

The return of religion in the public realm appears to have encouraged concerned radical religious specialists and religious-nationalists of each of the conflicting religious communities; thus, they (with greater confidence) began religionization of politics and vice-versa to re-assert the central position of religion in the public life of the Indian society. At the same time, the concerned religious specialists tactically fused together religion and historical-social-economical-political factors, and gave religious implication to these secular aspects. Thenceforth, Hindu religio-nationalists started all-out campaign to achieve their religio-political objective of making India a Hindu nation, which would be governed by Hindu precepts – because from the beginning of Indian independence the religio-nationalist Hindus have been attempting to make India a Hindu state. In the meantime, the Sikh, Muslim and Christian ethno-religious-nationalist groups, too, with reinforced effort re-launched ethno-religious-nationalist movements to attain their religio-political goals. These ethno-religious

³³ According to Hrilrokhum Thiek, several church organizations and many church leaders took special initiative to end ethnic conflict between Dimasa Kachari and Hmar tribal groups in the beginning of the 21st century. Personal interview with Hrilrokhum Thiek (retired Minister of Presbyterian Church in India) over the phone on 30th September 2011, at 12 noon. Thiek lives in Mulhoi village in Haflong, in North Cachar Hills District, in Assam.

³⁴ Helena Cobban, on a peace building role of religion, writes: “In Mozambique leaders and practitioners in the indigenous and Christian religious traditions contributed greatly to peacebuilding during and after the 1977-1992 civil war. In South Africa religious concepts and religious leadership were both central to the success of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In Rwanda, where many religious institutions were badly compromised by their actions during the 1994 genocide, other religious institutions have played a notable role in promoting social healing in recent years.” Helena Cobban, “Religion and Violence,” in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 73, No. 4 (December 2005), 1121.

minorities dared to attack the “religious wall” of Hindus by demanding independence or autonomy for the ethno-religious minority dominated regions. The “religious wall” of the Hindus clearly defines that the whole of India is *punya bhumi* (holy land) and *pitri bhumi* (ancestral land) of the Hindus, so, the land belongs to the Hindus; whereas the non-Hindus either have to denounce their religion and be Hindu, leave the country and settle somewhere else or accept a subservient position without demanding any right and privilege, even the right of citizenship.³⁵ Thus, the geo-political demands of the ethno-religious minorities further infuriated the Hindu community that had, from the second half of the nineteenth century, begun to develop anti-minority (particularly Christian, Muslim and Sikh religious minorities) stance due to socio-historical (including the reconstructed historical) factors, such as centuries of Muslim and Christian rule and their missionary activities, partition of India on religious ground, failure to make India Hindu nation, and the rights and privileges granted to the religious minorities in the Indian Constitution. So, the Muslim, Christian and Sikh ethno-religious minorities are perceived by the Hindu majority as serious threat to the survival of both Hindu dharma (Hindu culture and religion) and Hindu community (Hindu race). At the same time, the secular government (specifically the Congress government) is considered as the greatest enemy of Hinduism by the Hindu religious and religio-nationalist actors, because the secular government, according to them, supports and protects these religious minorities at all cost.³⁶ Actually, the bitter enmity between the secular parties (mainly the Congress and Communist parties) and Hindu religio-nationalists developed from the time the Constituent Assembly adopted secular Constitution, which made India a secular democracy and granted equal rights and privileges to the religious minorities. Thus, the Hindu religio-nationalists

³⁵ See Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 78 & 79.

³⁶ See Yogendra K. Malik and Dhirdendra K. Vajpeyi, “The Rise of Hindu Militancy: India’s Secular Democracy at Risk,” in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (March, 1989), 317.

started *dharma yudh* (religious/holy war) to get rid of the enemies of Hindu dharma-and-race from the time religious reawakening occurred in Indian society.

Likewise, from the dawn of Indian independence the Muslim, Sikh and Christian ethno-religious minorities have been seriously concerned about the survival of their ethno-religious and cultural identity on account of: overwhelming Hindu majority and anti-minority perspective of militant Hindu organizations; the fear of Indian state politics being managed and dictated by the Hindu majority. Therefore, right after the Indian independence Sikhs and Nagas launched movements demanding separate state for Sikhs of the Punjab and independence of Naga inhabited region respectively. Seemingly the main objective behind these geo-political demands was the protection of the ethno-religious and cultural identity from being submerged into the ocean of Hinduism. Whereas, the Kashmiri Muslims were suppressed for almost a century by Hindu rulers before the Indian independence, and after the independence they seemed to have experienced political deception under the Hindu dominated Indian secular-government. Besides, communal clashes occurred sporadically between the Hindus and Muslims in the Jammu region owing to the growing anti-Muslim temperament among Hindus of Jammu and other parts of India. Meanwhile, on several occasions the Indian state failed to protect the constitutional rights of the religious minorities from the aggressive Hinduism. Failure of the state to protect their constitutional rights might have further affirmed these religious minorities' conception that the Hindu dominated secular India state functioned for the well-being of the Hindus only. Thus, the religious antagonism of the ethno-religious minorities against the Hindu majority and the Hindu dominated Indian state began to intensify from the late 1970s.

Thus, in the given socio-historical context and prevailing socio-religio-political environment radical religious specialists and religious-nationalists of each conflicting religious tradition seem to have motivated and mobilized their religious constituencies for religious terrorism by innovating religious ideologies basing on select religious texts and symbols for justification of any form of religious violence against, so-called, “Others”³⁷ because, the “Others” are conceived as forces of evil that is after the destruction of the religion revealed and sanctified by the Ultimate Reality; therefore, these “Others” have become the enemies of the Divine Reality and they have forfeited the right of existence within the divine created or sanctified territory – India, Punjab or Kashmir. Apparently, religious justification of violence and the perspective that “Others” are forces of evil make religious terrorism a serious threat to the existing socio-political setup of the Indian nation.

In India religious terrorism – to fulfil its purpose and to attain its religio-political goal – uses various strategies including the modern weapons and technology. Religious terrorist organizations can carry out their subversive activities in any part of India and cross any limit of brutality. According to the experts on terrorism, religious terrorism has a “tendency to seek the elimination of broadly defined categories of enemies,” which means religious terrorists “are more inclined than many secular groups to risk large-scale violence as a necessary expedient for attaining their goal.”³⁸

³⁷ Those who do not conform to the set religious norms of a given religious group are considered as “Others”.

³⁸ Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation*, Carnegie (Lanham: Roeman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 104. Hereafter Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* (2000).

5. Meaning and Definition of (Religious) Terrorism

Literally the word terrorism (originally derived from Latin root “*terrere*”) means to cause “extreme fear”, “to terrorize” or “to terrify”.³⁹ “Terrorism,” according to David C. Rapoport, “is an activity that has probably characterized modern civilization from its inception”.⁴⁰ In general understanding, “terrorism” means a kind of “violent activity” that is planned to terrify people; it also “may mean, on the one hand, the psychic state – extreme fear – and, on the other hand, the thing that terrifies – the violent event that produces the psychic state.”⁴¹ According to John Ayto, “Terrorism and terrorists were coined in French in 1790s to denote the activities of revolutionary government during the ‘Terror’ where thousands of its opponents were put to death.”⁴² “The trembling that terrorism effects”, says Mark Juergensmeyer, “is part of the meaning of the term.”⁴³

There are various definitions of terrorism postulated by experts (Bruce Hoffman, Martha Crenshaw, Lee Griffith, Walter Reich, Paul Johnson, Mark Juergensmeyer and host of others) and government agencies. Though there are multiple definitions, no definition attains the mark of accuracy as once Laqueur commented, “Terrorism is like pornography. No one can

³⁹ *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary* (London: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1987); *The New Oxford Illustrated Dictionary*, 2nd ed., (Bay books in Association with Oxford University Press, 1978); *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, edited by R.E. Allen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); John Ayto, *Dictionary of Word Origins* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1999).

⁴⁰ David C. Rapoport, “Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions”, in *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 78, No. 3 (September 1984), 658. Hereafter Rapoport, “Fear and Trembling.”

⁴¹ Eugene Victor Walter, *Terror and Resistance: A Study of Political Violence with Case Studies of Some Primitive African Communities* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 5. Henceforth Walter, *Terror and Resistance*.

⁴² Ayto, *Dictionary of Word Origins*, 525.

⁴³ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, reprint (London: University of California Press, 2003), 5. Henceforth Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*.

really define it, but everyone recognizes it when they see it.”⁴⁴ Lee Griffith thinks that only a victim of the act of terrorism can define terrorism properly.⁴⁵ Griffith may be right to some extent because the victim’s knowledge comes through his/her own personal or firsthand experience. However, the definition of the victims of two different acts of terrorism also is sure to vary because one act of terrorism could be different from another act of terrorism in many ways – for example the experience of the victims of terrorist act on 9 September 2001 in New York might be different from the experience of the victims of bomb blasts in London on 7 July 2005 and recent bombing and shooting in Mumbai in November, 2008. Furthermore, sometimes the victim may have prejudices against a group of people, a religious community, a political party or a state government; in such a case the victim’s description can be biased or judgemental one.

In defining terrorism there can be less argument, but “there may be less agreement as to who precisely is a ‘terrorist’ and what is a ‘terrorist organization,’ since the weapon of terrorism is used by many, some for only a short while or to a particular end.”⁴⁶ At the same time, terrorism can be manipulated by political parties and their agents, governments and law enforcing agencies to fulfil their political agenda. Walter says, “Ever since the French Revolution, ‘terrorist’ has been an epithet to fasten on a political enemy.”⁴⁷ On the other hand, “revolutionary radicals have tended to think of terror as a defensive maneuver against counterrevolutionary forces.”⁴⁸ During French revolution the revolutionaries openly with

⁴⁴ Lee Griffith, *The War on Terrorism and the Terror of God* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 8. Henceforth Griffith, *The War on Terrorism*.

⁴⁵ Griffith, *The War on Terrorism*, 8.

⁴⁶ Edgar Ballance, *Terrorism in the 1980s* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1989), 10.

⁴⁷ Walter, *Terror and Resistance*, 4.

⁴⁸ Walter, *Terror and Resistance*, 4.

pride wore the label *Terroriste*⁴⁹ to prove that they were the revolutionaries who terrorise their political foes. But, at present terrorists do not identify themselves as such. Those who are involved in modern terrorist activities often disguise themselves as either freedom fighters or holy warriors of God or liberators. The subject becomes more complicated when every terrorist assumes the guise of somebody's freedom fighter or holy warrior or liberator; as the maxim goes "someone's terrorist is another's freedom fighter."⁵⁰

Terrorism, contends Bruce Hoffman, deliberately creates violence to cause intense fear in the heart of immediate "target audience" for wider repercussion – the intention is to make political change. This wider target "might include a rival ethnic or religious group, an entire country, a national government or political party,"⁵¹ or entire public. It aims to create authority where there is a power vacuum, and where there is less power it aims to consolidate power.⁵² According to this definition, the ultimate purpose of terrorism is political one, i.e., to gain political power by all means. This definition leaves out an unspecified inner motivation that inspires many young, wealthy and highly qualified people, to involve themselves in terrorist activities and die a martyr's death.

Martha Crenshaw thinks that terrorism "is not a neutral descriptive term," and any politically motivated definition of terrorism is subjective one. According to her, "in contemporary politics, calling adversaries 'terrorists' is a way of depicting them as fanatic and irrational so as to foreclose the possibility of compromise, draw attention to the real or imagined threat to

⁴⁹ *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, 2nd ed., unabridged (Random House Inc., 1987).

⁵⁰ Griffith, *The War on Terrorism*, x.

⁵¹ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (London: Indigo, 1998), 15, cited by David J. Whittaker, *The Terrorism Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 10.

⁵² Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 15.

security, and promote solidarity among the threatened.”⁵³ Therefore, in Crenshaw’s understanding, “‘terrorism’ is a political label,” which “is useful shorthand, combining descriptive, evocative, and symbolic elements, but its meanings are inherently flexible and ambiguous,” and “may even be contradictory.”⁵⁴ It is true that any politically motivated definition of terrorism could be subjective, biased, limited or imperfect; however, in every definition we can see a picture, though in imperfect or incomplete form, of terrorism and can figure out what terrorism really is.

In the opinion of Lee Griffith, “Terrorism is the intentional effort to generate fear through violence or the threat of violence and the further effort to harness these fears in pursuit of some goal.”⁵⁵ He further thinks that, besides political target there is also the possibility of religious or economic objectives being commingled with political uses in motivating an act of terrorism. Hence, he suggests defining terrorism “by what is done and not by who does it,” then there is possibility that “charges of ‘terrorism’ may function as something other than mere propaganda.”⁵⁶ This definition appears rather superficial, because Griffith suggests to leave out the main actor/s in defining terrorism – such definition can only present a vague picture of terrorism, particularly religious terrorism. An act of violence and the perpetrator/s of the act are inseparable from each other, and we could only understand terrorism in better way when both are taken into account.

⁵³ Martha Crenshaw (ed.), *Terrorism in Context* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2007), 10.

⁵⁴ Martha Crenshaw (ed.), *Terrorism in Context* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 10, cited by David J. Whittaker, *The Terrorism Reader* (London: Routledge, 2001), 13.

⁵⁵ Griffith, *The War on Terrorism*, 6.

⁵⁶ Griffith, *The War on Terrorism*, 18.

Terrorism, according to Walter Reich, is “a strategy of violence designed to promote desired outcomes by instilling fear in the public at large”.⁵⁷ Likewise, in the opinion of David Whittaker, terrorism “is a premeditated threat or use of violence intended to intimidate.”⁵⁸ These definitions are, to some extent, similar to Hoffman’s definition mentioned earlier.

Paul Johnson defines terrorism as “The deliberate, systematic murder, maiming, and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear in order to gain political ends. [...] Terrorism [...] is intrinsically evil, necessarily evil, and wholly evil”.⁵⁹ For two reasons this sounds like purely judgemental, one-sided and incomplete definition – first, the main objective of terrorism is an attainment of a political goal and, second, terrorism is utterly evil. The first opinion leaves out religious terrorism and its main objective (which might not be just political one) and the second one makes a subjective judgement without taking into consideration the people (religious community, ethnic group or a society) who support terrorist groups explicitly or implicitly, due to a certain religious or political reason, and those (ethnic, political or communal) forces that compel people (minority religious, ethnic or social group) to follow a path of terrorism.

“Terrorism,” according to Juergensmeyer, “is meant to terrify.” It is public act “of destruction, committed without a clear military objective, that arouse a widespread sense of fear.”⁶⁰ “This fear”, Juergensmeyer says,

often turns to anger when we discover the other characteristic that frequently attends these acts of public violence: their justification by religion. Most people feel that

⁵⁷ Whittaker, ed., *The Terrorism Reader*, 3-4.

⁵⁸ David J. Whittaker, *Terrorists and Terrorism: in the Contemporary World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 58-9.

⁵⁹ Whittaker, ed., *The Terrorism Reader*, 3-4.

⁶⁰ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 5.

religion should provide tranquillity and peace, not terror. Yet in many of these cases religion has supplied not only the ideology but also the motivation and the organizational structure for the perpetrators.⁶¹

It is true that every religion has both non-violent (like love and peace) and violent (like sacrifice – which involves killing of a victim) symbols, but it all depends upon the concerned religious authorities/leaders to determine whether the symbols (both violent and non-violent) be used for peace-building or to justify an act of violence. At the same time, both types of symbols can be managed for good as well as destructive purposes – for example, a non-violent symbol can be manipulated to justify an act of violence, so also a violent symbol can be used for peace-building. So, religious authorities play the vital role in the management of religious symbols.

In addition to the individual thinkers' definitions, discussed above, I also would like to review in brief the definitions of the USA and the United Kingdom governments. The US Department of Defence defines terrorism as

The calculated use of violence or the threat of violence to inculcate fear, intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies as to the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious or ideological.⁶²

Similarly, the United Kingdom government defines terrorism as “The use of threat, for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause, of action which involves serious violence against any person or property”.⁶³ In both the definitions the objectives of terrorism may not be specifically an attainment of political end, as Hoffman and Johnson think, but may be an achievement of religio-political, religious or ideological goals. My main concern here is that these definitions leave out state governments or government agencies that

⁶¹ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 5.

⁶² Whittaker, ed., *The Terrorism Reader*, 3-4.

⁶³ Whittaker, ed., *The Terrorism Reader*, 3-4.

were/are involved in training and funding certain terrorist groups. For example, Saudi Arabia and the USA, through Pakistan government, funded and trained Taleban extremists in 1980s against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.⁶⁴ Many of the arms supplied to the Taleban extremists later on were diverted to other terrorist groups. Likewise the Pakistan government is openly accused by India for training and supporting some of the Kashmiri terrorist groups like *Lashkar-e-Taiba* (LeT).⁶⁵ Thus, these are one-sided, inadequate and restricted definitions of terrorism.

To sum up the above definitions: terrorism is an extreme form of violence committed against people and property aiming to achieve certain political, religio-political, ideological or theological goals. Religious terrorism is terrorism that claims – basing its ideology of violence on the given religious conviction, selected religious texts/teachings and symbols, and the given historical and socio-political context – to fight divinely sanctioned battles or holy wars, whereas religious terrorists aim to achieve specific political or religio-political goals here and now. Since this terrorism relies on a given religion to justify its act of violence, all those who do not conform to the given ideological claims of this terrorism are considered to be the forces of evil and they are to be terrorised and destroyed using all forms of violence. In some cases religious terrorists may begin their terrorist activities due to socio-political factors against a government, majority or minority community or another ethnic group and afterwards

⁶⁴ “During the Afghan struggle against Soviet Union, Pakistan played the role of a broker to serve the interest of both Saudi Arabia and USA and got billions of dollars from them.” The fund was spent to produce *Jihadi* elements. Available from <http://www.southasiaanalysis.Org/%5Cpapers32%5Cpaper3136.html>; Internet accessed: 9 February 2011.

⁶⁵ According to Rajghatta, Vince Canni Straro, a former CIA Chief of counter-terrorism operations, testified before the House of International Relations Committee that, Pakistan had “also used its position and support to the Taliban to establish within Afghanistan a series of training camps for Kashmiri terrorists. ISI personnel” were “present, in Mufti, to conduct the training.” Chidanand Rajghatta, “US Continues to Shield Pakistan on Terrorism,” in *The Times of India*, Internet Edition (5 October, 2001); available from http://www.timesofindia.com/articleshow.asp?art_id=405772599; Internet accessed: 9 February 2011.

manipulate religious ideology to justify their act of violence to gain sympathy and the support of their wider religious community to strengthen and sustain the given terrorist organization.

Religious terrorism functions in two different forms – the “technically organized” form and the “religio-politically motivated” form. The first category is a systematically organized form (similar to a military establishment) of religious terrorist group that uses latest technology and weapons of mass destruction against a government, governments or people. Every active member of this terrorist organization is trained and armed to do or die to achieve the goal of the organization. In the meantime, terrorist activities of the technically organized terrorist groups do not conform to a particular geo-political boundary.

The second category is a religious organization that terrorises and destroys life and property of the people belonging to other religious (particularly minority) communities to achieve its given religio-political goals. This form of terrorist organization may or may not use latest technology and weapons of mass destruction. Such groups’ terrorist activities are mostly motivated and sustained by religio-political organizations or parties, and they mostly function within a limited geo-political boundary. In India, particularly, the distinction of these two types of religious terrorism is obvious.⁶⁶ These two types of religious terrorism will be further elaborated in the case study of four (Hindu, Islamic, Sikh and Christian) religious traditions in India.

⁶⁶ In India, besides technically organized religious terrorist groups, there are certain religious organizations (such as the *Bajrang Dal* and the *Trisul Sena*) mainly motivated by religio-political parties of the majority religious community, that use terrorist tactics to terrorise and destroy life and property of the people belonging to the minority faiths with the aim of establishing divine rule as per their religious ideology.

6. Why and When Religion sanctions Violence?

Several questions arise when we think of religious terrorism. How can violence and religion, which often preaches divine love, peace and brotherhood, go together? Does the divine authorize its devotees to commit violent acts of terrorism to destroy human lives and property? What is the basis for the terrorising group that claim to be faithful devotees of a particular faith that, it is the divine sanction that they should eliminate those who do not conform to their religious belief?

The Latin root *religare*, which means ‘to bind’, is the appropriate term to define religion in one word.⁶⁷ This binding requires blood as cementing element, and to shed blood ‘violence’ needs to be committed in the name of sacred/holy. Violence is physical act of inflicting physical as well mental injury or destruction of life – life of a person or surrogate victim – and property. One of the Latin roots from which the word comes is *violare*, meaning ‘to violate’. “Whatever ‘violates’ another, in the sense of infringing upon or disregarding or abusing or denying that other, whether physical harm is involved or not, can be understood as an act of violence.”⁶⁸

In the meantime, religion is the embodiment of both violent (e.g. sacrificial ritual/rituals, war between good and evil, weapons of divinities, divine victory over evil and destruction of forces of evil) and non-violent (such as renunciation, self-sacrifice, cross – which can be non-

⁶⁷ Religion binds an individual member to the concerned religious community/group and also it establishes bond between the community/group and the other-worldly Reality/realities. Thus the given religious community exists simultaneously in two different worlds, the world of mortals and the world of spiritual or divine being/beings or seen and unseen worlds. Robert McAfee Brown tries to define religion, rather vague, in the following words: “Although the etymology is itself in some dispute, there is agreement about a number of Latin roots from which our present word has come, and their convergent meanings are useful in seeking a working definition. The Latin *religare* refers to that which binds; *religio* refers to a constraint that no one can evade; and *religere* describes that which repeats itself, in the sense of a verdict to which we return again and again. The cumulative ingredients of these Latin terms, then, are the notion of a binding constraint from which we cannot escape, and to which we feel deeply committed.” Robert McAfee Brown, *Religion and Violence: A Primer for White Americans* (Philadelphia: the Westminster Press, 1973), 3.

⁶⁸ Brown, *Religion and Violence* (1973), 7.

violent as well as violent symbol, holy martyr – can be non-violent as well as violent symbol, and divine love to humanity) teachings and symbols; however, both types of symbols can be manipulated theologically, either to justify violent acts or to build peace, by religious authorities. So, religion can play both roles of peace building and supplying ideology for the justification of acts of terrorism. This dual nature of religion R. Scott Appleby calls “the ambivalence of the sacred.”⁶⁹

6.1. Two Dimensions of Religion

Religion – considering mainly in this context Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism – matters both ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’ dimensions. The terms “sacred” and “profane” are used by Mircea Eliade to define divine/spiritual/holy cosmos and desacralized/imperfect/unholy/temporal/unspiritual world respectively. According to Eliade:

The first possible definition of the sacred is that it is the opposite of the profane [...] Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane [...] it could be said that the history of religions – from the most primitive to the most highly developed – is constituted by a great number of *hierophanies* [i.e. manifestation of sacred], by manifestations of sacred realities. From the most elementary *hierophany* – e.g. manifestation of the sacred in some ordinary object, a stone or a tree – to the supreme *hierophany* (which, for a Christian, is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ) there is no solution of continuity. In each case we are confronted by the same mysterious act – the manifestation of something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our natural ‘profane’ world [...] The polarity sacred-profane is often expressed as an opposition between *real* and *unreal* or *pseudoreal* [...] Thus it is easy to understand that religious man deeply desires to be, to participate in reality, to be saturated with power.⁷⁰

Hence, to a religious person, sacred is holy, infallible, unquestionable, and obligatory; the profane, on the other hand, is unholy, immoral, unacceptable, contaminable, and dangerous –

⁶⁹ See Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*.

⁷⁰ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: the Nature of Religion*, translated by Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1961), 10-13; also see Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1958), 7ff.

profane therefore is anathema to religious fanatics.⁷¹ These contradictions in religious teachings have been there since the beginning of the existence of religion – the dichotomy of sacred and profane, or light and darkness is found in all religions. The sacred is to be preserved and protected at all cost, constantly nurtured with undefiled faith and ritual practices, and no contradictory and opposing elements are to be tolerated. However, religious demarcation line between sacred and profane and righteous and evil appears to be very narrow and often misinterpreted and manipulated by radical religious authorities to justify religious violence/terrorism.

Furthermore, the idea of sacred and profane also demarcates territorial boundary, as sacred land and profane land. The sacred land is to be inhabited and ruled by the people of the given faith community only. For Hindus, India is the Holy Land, because it is god given land (*deva-nirmita bhumi*) to the Hindus. According to Manu, great Hindu Law giver, beyond the boundary of India is *Melechchhadesh*,⁷² the land of barbarians; therefore, the land beyond Indian border is profane or unholy.⁷³ Since India is god-given land to the Hindus the sacredness of every holy place is to be protected by all means. Similarly, Punjab is the land of Sikh Gurus, so it is holy land for the Sikhs; Kashmir is dominated by Muslims, therefore, the land should be the “house of Islam”; and Naga dominated region is divine given land for the Naga Christians. Thus, the understanding of sacred and profane is mixed with violence and

⁷¹ In Arabia Umar, the second *khalifa* (634-644 CE), established a rule, “that none except Muslims might remain in Arabia. So the Jews and Christians who would not accept Islam had to leave the country.” It is because the land comprises the two most Holy places of Islam “Mecca and Medina, which are called *haramain*, or ‘the two sacred areas’, because they enclose the birthplace and the tomb” of Muhammad, the prophet. [See L. Bevans Jones, *The People of the Mosque*, reprint (Delhi: ISPCK, 1998), 30.] Any non-Islamic is profane, which is unholy and polluting, therefore should not be accepted within the said sacred territory. For Hindus India is the Holy Land, because it is *deva bhumi* (land of gods), *pitri bhumi* (land of ancestors), *karma bhumi* (land of action), and *punya bhumi* (land of merit); hence it is the holy land. Since, it is holy land only the people, who obey, follow and practice its sacred history and sacred precepts are worthy to inhabit it in true sense.

⁷² *Manu-Smriti* 2:23.

⁷³ *This was why Hindus were prohibited to travel beyond Indian borders.*

non-violence. A sacred territory of a given religion has to be protected from profane by the adherents of the concerned religion by any means and, if there arises any threat to the sacred territory it is an obligatory duty of every follower of the given religion to take up arms in the name of the holy and fight against the profane or evil force.

6.2. Sacred Symbols and Holy Violence

Meanwhile, the above-given religions embody various symbols – tangible or conceptual – and these symbols are often as sacred as the sacred itself. Such symbols have sacred history and social significance to the given society; therefore, the symbols are embodiment of profound theological paradigm. These religious symbols seem to function like constantly connecting threads to interconnect Hindu, Sikh, Islamic and Naga Christian religious societies with their ancestors, both sacred and secular history and divinity. Indeed, symbols play very important role, therefore, many devout followers of the given religions wear symbols (such as five *Ks*, trident or marks on the forehead, cross and crescent) as their ethno-religious identity and as constant reminder towards their religious duties and convictions. At the same time, holy places, like birth places of saints and god-men, are very important sacred symbols. To Peter Van Der Veer, sacred places

are the foci of religious identity. They are the places on the surface of the earth that express most clearly a relation between cosmology and private experience. A journey to one of these centers is a discovery of one's identity in relation to the other world and to the community of believers – a ritual construction of self that not only integrates the believers but also places a symbolic boundary between them and "outsiders".⁷⁴

To a believing religious community sacred symbols are holy and should not be reviled by anybody. Ayodhya/*Babri Masjid*⁷⁵ issue is one of the most volatile religious issues which can

⁷⁴ Peter Van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Barkley: University of California Press, 1994), 11.

⁷⁵ Babri Mosque in Ayodhya.

flare up religious violence in India.⁷⁶ For the Hindus Ayodhya is a sacred symbol because it is the birth place of Rama; hence, reclaiming of the sacred symbol is like re-enactment of pristine glory of ancient India ruled by divine and righteous king Rama who destroyed the forces of Ravana,⁷⁷ the king of demons (*rakshashas/danavas*). Likewise, the mosque is important sacred symbol for the Muslims. In the same way, the Golden Temple is one of the most sacred symbols for the Sikhs. Thus, sacred symbols mean much to the believing religious community and to protect the sacred symbols holy violence/terrorism might be inevitable.

7. Importance of This Research

Even though a lot of studies have been done by various intellectuals on Sikh terrorism, Naga militancy, Hindu communalism and Islamic militancy in Kashmir, further investigation is necessary to comprehend what is/are important motivating factor/factors in the rise of militancy/extremism/terrorism nurtured by Sikh, Islamic, Hindu and Christian religious traditions in India. Besides the term terrorism, I have used extremism, militancy and insurgency in this thesis. Militancy is a self-justified act of aggression or violence to achieve political, religio-political or theological goal; extremism advocates political or religious radicalism and extreme ideas and actions that are not reasonable and not acceptable to any normal society; whereas, insurgency is an armed movement which seeks independence/separation/autonomy of a geo-political region/territory, e.g. Nagaland, Punjab or Jammu and Kashmir. Although violence is integral part of militancy, extremism and insurgency, it is not necessary that militancy, extremism or insurgency should lead to

⁷⁶ Violence in India, from the late 1980s, can be termed as holy violence.

⁷⁷ The battle between Rama and Ravana is described in detail in the *Yuddha Kanda* (section) in the *Ramayana*, one of the Hindu epics. See *The Ramayana of Valmiki*, Vol. III, translated by Hari Prasad Shastri (London: Shanti Sadan, 1959), 89ff.

terrorism. However, it is obvious that the violent activities – such as violence against Muslims in Gujarat in 2002, violence against Christians in Orissa in 2007-8, killing of innocent Hindus and *Nirankaris* in Punjab from the early 1980s, and violence against the Hindu minorities (Kashmiri Pundits) in Kashmir from the early 1990s – of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim extremist organisations characterize acts of religious terrorism. Apparently the above given examples of the acts of violence denote that the purpose of the Hindu, Sikh and Muslim extremism is to terrorize perceived enemies (e.g. Hindu majority considers Muslim and Christian communities enemies of Hinduism, and to *Khalsa* Sikh and Kashmiri Muslim communities Hindu majority is a serious threat to the survival of their ethno-religious identity) and to destroy the lives and property of the, so-called, enemies. Therefore, Hindu, Sikh and Muslim extremists use all forms of violent methods to destroy the lives of targeted victims; meanwhile, the Hindu, Sikh and Muslim extremists cross all limits of human brutality to perform acts of religious violence. Therefore, in the case studies I have used the terms extremism and terrorism for the Sikh, Hindu and Kashmiri Muslim religious violence. In regard to the Naga armed movement I used the words militancy and insurgency because the Naga militancy/insurgency does not seem to come under the category of terrorism or religious terrorism. Apparently the Naga insurgency is an armed rebellion against the Indian state; thus, the main target of the insurgency is the state machinery (mostly military, Para-military and police personnel and suspected informers). Apparently the chief goal of this insurgency is geo-political one, i.e. to achieve independence of the Naga inhabited territory/territories. Moreover, the Naga armed militancy does not appear to have religious/holy war ideology (as Sikh, Hindu and Islamic terrorism) even though Christianity is the vital part of Naga ethnicity and identity; therefore, it does not target or terrorise any religious community/group/sect in the name or for the sake of the Naga Christianity.

In this study I attempt to establish, in contrast to the prevailing arguments, that radical religious ideology, on the basis of historical and prevailing socio-political contexts, is the main motivating factor for the birth of religious terrorism in India. Hence, it is imperative to assess how the socio-religious-political environment from the pre-independent period produced negative impact among the above-given religious communities and how this negative effect turned into religious bitterness and communal conflict. Meanwhile, in the post-independent period how various socio-cultural and political grievances further aggravated this religious antagonism and transformed it into religious extremism/terrorism in the early 1980s. Moreover, the problem of religious terrorism is most likely to get further intensification if any of the conflicting communities attempt to manipulate religious and socio-historical-political ground, the common ground that seems to be accountable for the rise and nurture of religious terrorism in India. In the meantime, this study endeavours to explore possible solutions for the deconstruction of religious terror for communal harmony in the Indian society and geo-political integrity of the Indian state.

8. Arrangement of the Chapters

This thesis, besides introduction and conclusion, consists of seven chapters. First chapter analyses: the problem of Indian secularism; manipulation of religion or communalisation of politics by political leaders for political purposes; failure of the Indian state to safeguard constitutional rights of the religious minorities; and critique of the secular state by Hindu, Sikh, Muslim and Christian communities. The study is an effort to explain the complicated and problematic relationship between religion and state and majority and minority religious communities, and how this complicated relationship helps in escalation of religious hatred and violence against the secular state and among the conflicting communities. Second, third, fourth and fifth chapters are the case studies of Sikh religious terrorism, Islamic terrorism in

Kashmir, Hindu religious terrorism and Naga Christian militancy respectively. The case studies are based on a critical survey of literature and secondary sources rather than on primary material or fieldwork. The studies present: some of the prevalent arguments of different scholars on the rise of terrorism/militancy in India; my argument on the rise of the religious terrorism; socio-historical background of religious antagonism; religious and socio-political concerns of the conflicting religious groups and augmentation of religious antagonism in the post-independent period; how religious ideology is fused together with historical and socio-political concerns and experiences of the people of the given religious communities by religious or religio-nationalist actors to motivate holy war against the conceived enemies; brief review of the activities of religious terrorism; and how the problem of religious terrorism is further complicated by the Indian state's military strategy. Sixth chapter offers a comparative reflection on religious terrorism. Finally, the seventh chapter tenders practicable socio-religious solution for conflict resolution and deconstruction of religious terror in India.

CHAPTER I

RELIGIOUS TERRORISM IN INDIA

I.1. Introduction

Religious terrorism began in the Indian soil from the early 1980s. On account of terrorist activities thousands of precious lives are lost, many are permanently (both physically and mentally) wounded and enormous amount of public and private properties are destroyed. Moreover, religious terrorism has created insecurity, distrust and hatred among the people professing different religious faiths. Meanwhile, in spite of the use of military strategy and political tactics by the Indian state to subdue this phenomenon from the very beginning, the number of terrorist organizations has increased dramatically from the late 1980s. Apparently, one of the most common and important features of religious terrorism is the use of religious ideology to mobilize the concerned religious constituency for terrorist activities. Hence, this phenomenon is posing a serious threat to the communal harmony of Indian society and the political stability of the nation.

Arrangement of the chapter is as follows. Firstly, I present a review on state secularism and how state secularism functioned during the Congress and the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) governments till the beginning of 21st century. This might help to identify religio-political and social factors that become the basis for communal tension, religious violence and terrorism. Secondly, a critique of the secular state from Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Sikh perspectives is tendered. Finally, I offer a brief assessment (of general factors for religious terrorism) and conclusion.

I.2. Post-Independent Indian State

Since independence India has faced severe tests that have threatened its social integrity and political stability. India had to cope, on the one hand, with communal violence and the resettlement of millions of Hindu and Sikh refugees that poured in from Pakistan and, on the other, with the consolidation of the princely states within the Indian Union. The partition of British India, into India and Pakistan, was accompanied by communal riots and some of the worst social upheaval of the century. The communal riots, which destroyed the lives of 500,000 to 1,000,000 people¹ and uprooted almost 11,000,000 people from their home-land making them refugees,² seems to have filled the hearts and minds of many Indians with distrust and suspicion. Such attitudes have often tended to prove fatal to communal harmony and social unity in the post-independent India. Besides the serious problem of communal violence and resettlement of refugees, the government of the newly independent India had to face the difficulty – which it had inherited from the British – of the consolidation of the princely states within the Indian Union. The British not only caused the great divide, but left the fate of more than 362 large and small princely states undecided. The colonial power had renounced their treaty rights and had advised all of them to join either India or Pakistan.³ Within few months all, except Hyderabad, Jammu & Kashmir and Junagadh, were included in the federal Union of India through persuasion, cajoling, bullying and threatening.⁴ But the Muslim ruler (*nawab*) of Junagadh, a tiny seaport state on the coast of Gujarat with Hindu

¹ Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 68.

² According to Percival Spear, “The loss of life was estimated by judge Kholsa, a keen and cautious observer, at half a million people. The devastation in terms of the injured, misery and hate was far greater. The refugees (about five and a half million) who poured into West Pakistan were nearly one fifth of its then population, while the roughly equal number of Sikhs and Hindus moving eastwards were about the same proportion of the Indian Panjab and Western Uttar Pradesh.” Percival Spear, *The Oxford History of Modern India 1740-1975*, 2nd edition, 16th impression (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 405.

³ Spear, *The Oxford History of Modern India*, 407.

⁴ Spear, *The Oxford History of Modern India*, 407.

majority, wanted to join Pakistan; at the same time, the Muslim ruler (*Nizam*) of Hyderabad – out of its seventeen million population 85% was Hindu – was not eager to join the Indian Union. Ultimately, Jawaharlal Nehru sent in the Indian army and took control of both the territories in 1948.

The case of Jammu & Kashmir was not as straightforward as the case of Junagadh and Hyderabad. Muslim-majority Kashmir was ruled by a Hindu Maharajah; and at the same time the territory lied in between Pakistan and India. This complication, most probably, made the Maharajah put aside the decision of joining either India or Pakistan. But, in October 1947 Pathan tribesman from the North-West Frontier attacked Srinagar, aiming to forcibly merge Kashmir into Pakistan. The frightened Maharajah Hari Singh immediately signed a merger treaty with India following which Indian paratroopers landed in Srinagar and saved it from the Pathan attack. This incident caused the first full-scale war, in 1948, between India and Pakistan. In the war “Gilgit, Baltistan and Muzaffarbad were taken over by Pakistan, while the Kashmir Valley, Ladakh and most of Jammu fell to Indian control.”⁵ Pakistan, despite the final ceasefire, refused to recognize the actions of India in Kashmir. Such refusal on the part of Pakistan created high tension in the region and two more wars, in 1965 and 1971 (besides the first war in 1948), were fought between India and Pakistan. The tension continues to prevail between the two neighbours on Kashmir, although the Simla Agreement of 1973 partitioned Kashmir between India and Pakistan. The Kashmir territorial issue is arguably the most volatile one in the South Asian region. The problem not only strains the relationship between the two neighbours and threatens to cause nuclear war in the region, but also seems to play a dynamic role in the furtherance of the already prevailing distrust and suspicion

⁵ Yoginder Sikand, “The Emergence and Development of the Jama’at-i-Islami of Jammu and Kashmir (1940s-1990),” in *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 36, no. 3 (July, 2002), 723.

between Hindu and Muslim communities, not only in the Kashmir valley but in the wider part of India.

However, in spite of the communal problem faced by the post-independent Indian state, various religious communities seemed to have continued to coexist as one society (without being perturbed by any form of communal tension or violence) in many parts of India. Such mutually coexisting societies can be found, even today, in several parts of India. In the time of great socio-political upheaval these coexisting sections of Indian society could have been the ray of hope for the leaders and people of the newly liberated and truncated nation. Moreover, these coexisting societies appear to have latent potentialities that might provide a suitable model for conflict resolution in the present socio-religious and political environment in India.

Even though the post-independent India had to face severe socio-political crisis in the early stage because of “the bitter legacy of communal rioting,”⁶ Indian national leaders turned away from communalism and made India a multi-party secular democracy.

I.3. Secular State and Role of Religion in the Public Life

From the dawn of Indian independence the leaders of the Hindu Organizations – the Hindu *Mahasabha* and the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) – were against the secular project; their desire and demand was to make India a Hindu *Rashtra* (nation), which would be governed by Hindu laws and tenets. The leaders of *Mahasabha* and RSS were not the only ones that campaigned against the secular scheme, but in the Indian National Congress (INC) too there were some – both “backward looking” and “forward looking” Hindu traditionalists –

⁶ B.D.Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Origins and Development of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 1.

who opposed secularism and some others who expressed their serious doubts concerning secularism as the correct political principle for India.

From 1947 to 1950 the INC consisted of three groups with differing political views. All these three groups wielded a significant influence within and outside the INC. Among them, one group wanted to build India as “a liberal-democratic state with a constitution that was both secular and parliamentary in character;” another group wished to make India “a socialist state in which Collectivist Principles governed social and economic organization; and the third was working to realize a state which embodied Hindu traditions and values.”⁷ The third group was divided into “backward looking” Hindu traditionalists and “forward looking” Hindu nationalists. The “backward looking” traditionalists were conservatives who were in favour of continuation of age-old “hierarchical social order;” and the Hindu nationalists desired “to remould Hindu society on corporatist lines and to fashion the state accordingly.”⁸ The Hindu traditionalists gave more emphasis to Hindu culture and Hindu tradition. The traditionalists were “more xenophobic in outlook” but differed from the “Hindu nationalists,” because they hardly had “the ideological commitment of the latter.”⁹ According to Jaffrelot, “While Hindu nationalism is built around opposition to the Other, whether Muslim or Christian, Hindu traditionalism is manifested simply by the promotion of culture, together with the interests of the community.”¹⁰

⁷ Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics*, 5.

⁸ Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics*, 6.

⁹ Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics 1925 to the 1990s* (London: Hurst & Company, 1996), 83.

¹⁰ Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement*, 83-84.

Although there were (both within and outside the party) Hindu traditionalists and Hindu nationalists, the INC under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru remained a pluralistic, non-communal political organization that was committed to secularism. There were two important reasons behind this commitment: first, the party had pledged “to create a polity which would be scrupulously neutral towards all religions and into which, the socialist faction of the Congress believed, religion would gradually disappear;”¹¹ second, the party had to counter the threat of “Hindu nationalism’s continued demand after independence for a state in which Hinduism would enjoy a hegemonic role.”¹² Besides, the post-independent Indian population consisted of significant percentage of minority communities (in addition to the untouchables and outcastes within the Hindu community) that could not be ignored. After the partition there remained more than “43 million Muslims” in India who “constituted a potential source of opposition to any political movement aiming at Hindu domination;”¹³ and besides Muslims there were also Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Zoroastrians.

Pre-independent INC-led Indian nationalism sought to unite all Indians against imperialist forces to achieve Indian independence. According to Nehru and his allies, post-independent secularism was the continuance of pre-independent nationalism. Therefore, “Nehru insisted that whatever might happen in Pakistan, the Congress ‘must pursue with even greater determination than in the past our efforts’”¹⁴ in making India a secular state where every individual – irrespective of race, religion, caste and colour – would be able to live and walk

¹¹ Subrata Kumar Mitra, “Desecularising the State: Religion and Politics in India after Independence,” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Oct. 1991), 785.

¹² Mitra, “Desecularising the State: Religion and Politics,” 785.

¹³ Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics*, 3.

¹⁴ Mushirul Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation: India’s Muslims since Independence* (London: Hurst & Company, 1997), 139.

without any fear. Thus, the concept “of two nations, each based on a religion, was opposed to the secularity on which the Indian state was established.”¹⁵

India was declared a secular state by the Constituent Assembly in the Constitution of 1950, though the actual term “Secularism did not find a place in the Preamble till 1976.”¹⁶ The two fundamental principles of state secularism in India are *Sarvadharmā Sambhava* (good will towards all religions) and *dharma nirapeksha* (religious neutrality). According to these principles the Indian state is neither religious, nor anti-religious; rather the state has to observe goodwill towards all religions.¹⁷ These principles seem to be appropriate for a multi-religious country like India; however, practically there has been difficulty in the implementation of these principles due to the overwhelming Hindu majority.

There are three noteworthy factors in regard to Indian secularism: firstly, Indian secularism is a Gandhian-Nehruvian synthesis that, though sounds ambiguous, proposes to manage state neutrality and recognises religious diversity – this “religious diversity is acknowledged and protected through a framework of enabling provisions”¹⁸ – religious equality and religious liberty, and attempts to promote good will among diverse religious communities; secondly, it does not make clear-cut separation between the state and religion – in it sacred and secular often assume interchangeable forms; and thirdly, it recognizes religious political parties (like the *Bharatiya Janata Party* [BJP], the *Shiv Sena*, and the *Akali Dal*) and permits them to

¹⁵ Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, 139.

¹⁶ Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, 139; Anuradha Dingwaney Needham and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (eds.), *The Crisis of Secularism in India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 15.

¹⁷ Thomas Pantham, “Indian Secularism and Its Critics: Some Reflections,” in *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (Summer, 1997), 535.

¹⁸ Gurharpreet Mahajan and Surinder S. Jodhka, “Religions, Democracy and Governance: Spaces for the Marginalized in Contemporary India,” Religions and Development Working Paper 26 (International Development Department, University of Birmingham, 2008), 10.

contest elections and to form government in both state and the centre. Hence, the public and political life of Indian State is marked by religious mobilizations and religious symbols.

The Indian Constitution, “instead of restricting religion to the private domain,” recognizes the existence of various religious communities “with their own distinct moral and social codes and ways of life.”¹⁹ Article 25 of the Constitution grants every citizen the right to “profess, propagate and practice” her/his religion; and according to Article 26 every religious community has the right to “establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes.”²⁰ Yet the most remarkable feature of the Indian secularism is that Indian State recognizes “the presence of plural and diverse personal laws” (like the Hindu Code Act and Muslim Personal Law) “as well as the religious institutions involved in the enunciation and the interpretation of these codes.”²¹ These constitutional provisions guarantee the protection of the distinct identities of all minority communities, and prevent the majority community from applying any form of compulsion to assimilate them. Thus, the Indian Constitution “at the level of abstract principle”²² safeguards religious freedom of the people of all faiths and prepares ground that is favourable “to the promotion of religious diversity.”²³

Furthermore, in India people of all religious faiths have the right to practice, perform and observe religious rites, rituals and festivals. Many of these rites, rituals and festivals are

¹⁹ Mahajan and Jodhka, “Religions, Democracy and Governance,” 13; Granville Austin, “Religion, Personal Law and Identity in India,” in *Religion and Persona Law in Secular India*, edited by Gerald James Larson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 19-23.

²⁰ Mahajan and Jodhka, “Religions, Democracy and Governance,” 15.

²¹ Mahajan and Jodhka, “Religions, Democracy and Governance,” 14; Gerald James Larson, “Introduction: The Secular State in a Religious Society,” in *Religion and Persona Law in Secular India*, 1-3.

²² Rustom Bharucha, *In the Name of Secular: Contemporary Cultural Activism in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 16.

²³ Bharucha, *In the Name of Secular*, 13.

performed or celebrated collectively; they are performed outdoors, in public places like streets, clubs, river banks, etc. These religious practices place religion on the public stage. The State is expected to ensure that these religious practices are performed without any outside interference or disturbances.

So, there is no plainly established “wall of separation” between state and religion in India,²⁴ though India was made secular democracy. Gandhi and Nehru had different view in regard to religion and state. For Gandhi “all religions were true” and “a state based on a single religion was ‘worse than undemocratic,’” which meant negation of truth. Therefore, the post-independent Indian state, according to Gandhi, should adopt a political setup in which people professing different faiths would have equal rights, and would live together as one people. But, in the view of Nehru “religions were untruths,” and therefore he was

firmly convinced of the idea of a secular state as the ‘cardinal doctrine of modern democratic practice’. And for him such a doctrine was most clearly defined by ‘the separation of the state from religion’.²⁵

Furthermore, Nehru insisted that secular nationalism was far superior to religion because it was different from religion; therefore, in his point of view, there was no returning back “to a past full of religious identities.”²⁶ Nevertheless, right from the beginning of Indian independence this political aspiration of Nehru (to make India a strong secular nation where spirit of secular nationalism would overpower all forms of religious identities) remained unfulfilled because of the political forces of Gandhi, the Hindu Right and the religious minorities – Gandhians and religious minorities stood for equal rights and privileges for all

²⁴ Gurharpal Singh, “State and Religious Diversity: Reflections on Post-1947 India”, in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol.5, No. 2 (Autumn, 2004), 208.

²⁵ Singh, “State and Religious Diversity,” 208.

²⁶ Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 15.

religious communities, whereas the Hindu Right groups sought more rights and privileges for the Hindu majority. Consequently from 1947 onwards religion played a very important role in Indian politics. For example, the government's active role in the construction of Somnath Temple, the enactment of the Hindu Code Bill (1956) and the Shah Bano Case (1986) are some of the apparent examples of the force of religion on government – these points will be elaborated in the latter sections. Beside the use of religion by political parties, magistrates and court judges also would not hesitate to “include theological pronouncements in their judgments” to settle disputes between different religious factions.²⁷

I.4. State Secularism under Congress and BJP Regimes

During the Nehruvian period, owing to the consolidated leadership and determination of Nehru and also due to “the presence of numerous dedicated secularists in the party ranks,” the Congress remained “loyal to secular principles and practices,”²⁸ even though Nehru's government had to make certain positive responses to Hindu pressures. But, from the second half of 1970s the political dominance of the Congress began to slip away and with that “India's secular principles began to be sapped.”²⁹ During the Congress regimes (particularly under the leadership of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv Gandhi) state secularism began to weaken, due to the use of religion for political objectives, i.e. to woo Hindu (in Punjab, Hariyana and Jammu and Kashmir) and Muslim (in other regions of India) votes for the Congress Party so that the Congress leaders would hold on to political power – such power mongering political strategy of the Congress leaders prepared fertile ground for the rise of

²⁷ Ainslie T. Embree, *Utopias in Conflict: Religion and Nationalism in Modern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 101.

²⁸ Sumit Ganguly, “The Crisis of Indian Secularism,” in *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (October, 2003), 14.

²⁹ Ganguly, “The Crisis of Indian Secularism,” 14.

communal elements that could undermine the secular and democratic values of the Indian state. State secularism was further upset by unrestricted Hindu communal politics of the BJP and the *Sangh Parivar* (family of militant Hindu Organisations).

I.4.1. Nehru and His Administrative Policy

Nehru, a visionary of socialist democracy, had to struggle with the Hindu traditionalist elements (mainly) within the INC. Three of the most prominent leaders of Hindu traditionalists within the INC were Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (the Vice-premier and Home Minister), Kanaiyalal Maneklal Munshi (the Union Minister of Supply), and Rajendra Prasad (the first President of Indian Republic). The traditionalists within the Congress “looked for leadership more to the Home Minister,” Sardar Patel, “than to the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.”³⁰ One of the Hindu projects the traditionalists carried out was the reconstruction of Somnath Temple in Gujarat in 1950-1951. It was Sardar Patel who announced on 12 November 1947, at Junagadh in Gujarat state, that the temple would be rebuilt. He said: “the restoration of the idols would be a point of honour and sentiment with the Hindu public.”³¹ Munshi was the one who promoted the decision to go ahead with reconstruction project. Initially some leaders in the government considered in providing government fund for the reconstruction work; however, on the suggestion of Mahatma Gandhi, the leaders agreed that the project be financed by the public subscription. Finally, the remains of the old temple was demolished in October 1950 and in 1951, despite Nehru’s opposition, Rajendra Prasad, the President of India, performed the installation ceremony.³²

³⁰ Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics*, 6.

³¹ Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement*, 84. Cited in P. Van der Veer, “Ayodhya and Somnath: Eternal Shrines, Contested Histories,” in *Social Research*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Spring, 1992), 91.

³² Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement*, 84.

Nehru and Sardar Patel sometimes seemed to be at loggerheads. If Mahatma Gandhi had not been assassinated by the Hindu fanatic, Nathuram Godse,³³ the matter might have taken different turn. However, the death of Gandhi brought “emotional union” between the two leaders, Nehru and Sardar Patel – according to Percival Spear, “The government acquired a new unity and the people a fresh resolution.”³⁴ Before this “emotional union” between the two leaders broke apart, Patel died in December 1950 due to a heart attack. The death of Patel left Nehru’s leadership uncontested and dashed the hopes of Hindu traditionalists within the INC.

The Constitution of 1950 “did not recognise religious communities but only individuals, to whom it guaranteed in Article 25 ‘freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion.’”³⁵ Nevertheless, from the 1950s the Nehruvian Congress, though managed to distance the state from the communal parties and platform, responded positively to the pressure of Hindu community on the government. Two clear examples of such policy were promotion of Hindi language as national language and the Hindu Code Bill. The purpose of Hindu Code Bill was to make a provision for a civil code in place of the body of Hindu personal law. It caused a great controversy when it was introduced to the Constituent Assembly on 9 April, 1948. It was then “broken down to three more specialised bills which came before the *Lok Sabha* in its 1952-7 term.” The three specialised parts of the Bill are: the Hindu Marriage Bill, the Hindu Adoption Bill and Maintenance Bill and the Hindu Succession Bill.

³³ See B.D. Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Origins and Development of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 11. Nathuram Godse, a young Maharastrian, was then a member of extreme group in the *Hindu Mahasabha*. In early 1930s, he also had been the member of RSS and *Hindu Rashtra Dal*, a small Hindu voluntary organization.

³⁴ Spear, *The Oxford History of Modern India*, 406.

³⁵ Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement*, 102.

The Hindu Marriage Bill outlawed polygamy and contained provisions dealing with inter-caste marriages and divorce procedures; the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Bill had as its main thrust the adoption of girls, which till then had been little practiced; the Hindu Succession Bill placed daughters on the same footing as widows and sons where the inheritance of family property was concerned.³⁶

The Bill, to the Hindu traditionalists, was a threat to the stability and integrity of the traditional Hindu society; whereas the Hindu nationalists criticised the government for singling out the Hindu personal law without touching the Muslim personal law in the name of providing a uniform Civil Code for India. Finally, Nehru's government was forced to concede concessions to the critics of the Bill. A clear example of such concession is that the enacted Hindu Code Bill, "which greatly expanded the legal definition of a Hindu to include not only Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs, but also anyone who was not a Muslim, Christian, Zoroastrian or Jew."³⁷ Such concession only asserted the majoritarian right of the Hindus and denied distinctive identities and independent status of the Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs and traditional tribal religious groups. Nonetheless, the Nehruvian Congress Party maintained its distance from the communal politics though there were pressures from religious, ethnic and ethno-religious organizations like the *Jana Sangh*, the *Akali Dal*, Tamil nationalistic movement in 1950s and Naga Separatist Movement in the, then, Naga Hills.

I.4.2. State Secularism under Indira, Rajiv and Rao

In the post-Nehruvian era – mainly from the late 1970s – state secularism began to weaken due to the centralization and personalization of political power and the mismanagement of religious diversity by Mrs. Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi for their own political ends. In the first half of the 1970s Mrs. Gandhi, though for a brief period, was successful in restoring the Congress Party to the leading position due to her populist political slogan *garibi hatao* ("do

³⁶ Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement*, 102.

³⁷ Singh, "State and Religious Diversity," 210.

away with poverty”); nevertheless, her victory and popularity lasted only for a short period. However, after the imposition of emergency rule in 1975-77 Mrs. Gandhi became unpopular for which her Party was defeated in the general election of 1977. Although she returned to power in 1980 she could not regain her earlier popularity. To consolidate her hold on to power she began to flirt “with communal themes, occasionally courting India’s Hindus by rallying against religious minorities,”³⁸ mainly Sikhs and Kashmiri Muslims. In 1980, to keep the *Akali Dal* (Sikh political party) out of power, Mrs. Gandhi not only sought Hindu votes in Punjab, but also attempted to create division among the Sikhs. This led to the open hostility between Mrs. Gandhi and the *Akali Dal*, and both “assembled militant forces for political ends.”³⁹ In the same manner in 1983 Mrs. Gandhi boosted communal polarization in Kashmir when she campaigned on behalf of the state Congress in Kashmir. In that campaign she often appealed “to the fears of Jammu Hindus.”⁴⁰ Farooq Abdullah (son of Sheikh Abdullah) and his National Conference Party, riding on the political agenda of regional autonomy for Kashmir, secured victory over the state Congress and formed the government. However, in 1984 with the help of defections from his party Farooq was dismissed from the post of chief Minister by Kashmir governor Jagmohan, allegedly to fulfil Mrs. Gandhi’s wish. These strategies of Mrs. Gandhi are sometimes credited for the rise of Muslim ethno-religious extremism in Kashmir in the late 1980s and Sikh ethno-religious militancy in Punjab in the early 1980s, by social scientists. Apparently Mrs Gandhi’s divisive strategy against the Sikh ethno-religious minority ultimately culminated in her assassination in November 1984.

³⁸ Atul Kohli, “Can Democracies Accommodate Ethnic Nationalism? Rise and Decline of Self-Determination Movements in India,” in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 56, no. 2 (May, 1997), 332.

³⁹ Kohli, “Can Democracies Accommodate Ethnic Nationalism?”, 337.

⁴⁰ Kohli, “Can Democracies Accommodate Ethnic Nationalism?”, 340.

Mrs. Gandhi's inclination "to overstep the bounds of constitutional propriety on secularism and other matters" prepared feasible ground for "the rapid rise of an antiseccular alternative."⁴¹ During her administration "most of India's political institutions fell into disarray."⁴² Further, she destroyed whatever relationship that existed between the Congress and the minorities since independence. According to Singh:

The storming of the Golden Temple, the subsequent assassination of Mrs. Gandhi and the pogroms against Sikhs in New Delhi – all marked a neat reversal of the Congress's relationship with religious minorities: from being their main guardian it became their chief persecutor.⁴³

Mrs. Gandhi's practice of misappropriation of secular principles for political goal was further accelerated by Rajiv Gandhi, Mrs Gandhi's son and successor, during his tenure as India's Prime Minister. He, being a less experienced politician, unsuccessfully tried to please religious (both majority and minority) communities, and in doing so he aggravated the communal tension between Hindus and Muslims. He was responsible for reopening the Babri Mosque dispute; mishandling of Shah Bano case (which was related to Muslim Personal Law); mismanagement of the Punjab militancy problem and the Kashmir issue, which led to the present crisis; and the broadcasting of *The Ramayana* (a Hindu epic) in serial form on the state-managed television (*Doordarshan*) for all India.⁴⁴ The Shah Bano case, though insignificant in itself, became one of the most complicated and worst misused communal issues in the post-independent India. In the Shah Bano case (in 1986) Rajiv Gandhi, "to ensure continued support of Muslim voters" and "to prevent further outbreak of violence", introduced a bill in the "Parliament that effectively abrogated the precedent set by the

⁴¹ Ganguly, "The Crisis of Indian Secularism," 15.

⁴² Ganguly, "The Crisis of Indian Secularism," 14.

⁴³ Singh, "State and Religious Diversity," 212.

⁴⁴ Singh, "State and Religious Diversity," 212.

supreme court's award of maintenance to Shah Bano. This award had been given under the provisions of section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which required husbands to support their divorced wives, but the bill abrogated this for Muslims by stating that the clause did not apply to Muslim marriages." The bill "became law on 6 May, even though perhaps no other piece of legislation since 1947 had aroused such widespread and impressive opposition."⁴⁵

Shah Bano case had attracted more public attention than any other single concern in the Indian Press in 1986 "and it had repercussions that raised fundamental questions about the nature of Indian politics."⁴⁶ Seemingly the Shah Bano controversy not only promoted antagonism between Hindu and Muslim communities in the early 1986, but was inextricably connected to Babri Mosque controversy as well as Kashmir problem. According to Asgar Ali, if the Shah Bano controversy did not "attract maximum media attention the *Babri-Masjid* controversy would not have heightened."⁴⁷ According to Embree:

In both the Shah Bano and Babri Mosque incidents, the lines of conflict were fairly clearly drawn, as far as Muslims were concerned. The legal rights of Muslims as a religious community within the Indian national state, as guaranteed by the constitution, Muslims argued, were being challenged by Hindu groups who were antagonistic to the continuance of those rights.⁴⁸

Moreover, it seems that Rajiv not only aggravated already existing distrust and antagonism between Hindu and Muslim religious communities, but also promoted Hindu resentment against other minorities, particularly against Christians. Thus, Rajiv's political approach not

⁴⁵ See Ainslie T. Embree, *Utopias in Conflict: Religion and Nationalism in Modern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 108-110.

⁴⁶ Embree, *Utopias in Conflict*, 96.

⁴⁷ Asghar Ali Engineer (ed), *Babri-Masjid Ramjanambhoomi Controversy* (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1990), 1.

⁴⁸ Embree, *Utopias in Conflict*, 105.

only weakened his party's political hold in Northeast Indian states and Uttar Pradesh, but also played a significant role in weakening something of India's secular institution.

Narasimha Rao, Rajiv's successor, continued to pursue Rajiv's strategy. During Rao's Premiership the Babri Masjid (a sixteenth century Mosque) in the city of Ayodhya, in Uttar Pradesh, was destroyed (on 6 December 1992) "by politically organised mobs of activist Hindus, who want to build a temple to Rama on that very spot."⁴⁹ According to C.P. Bhambhri, the destruction of the Mosque by a Hindu mob "revealed the serious weaknesses and vulnerabilities of the Indian state to protect and promote its own values and commitments to democracy and secularism."⁵⁰ Rao's Government could have prevented that religiously offensive incidence if it was committed to safeguarding the fundamental principles of Indian secularism. The failure of both the central and the state governments to prevent the demolition of the Mosque led to "communal violence and riots across the country, in which around two thousand people or more [have] perished – both Hindus and Muslims, but Muslim victims have far out-numbered Hindus."⁵¹ Paul Brass reports that the picture of the destruction of the Mosque "was then followed by the pictures flashed round the world of Bombay in flames from the riots that followed after the destruction of the mosque a thousand miles away."⁵² Consequently, the hatred between Hindu and Muslim communities increased. Apparently the

⁴⁹ Amartya Sen, "The Threats to secular India," in *Social Scientists*, Vol. 21, No. 3 / 4 (March – April, 1993), 5.

⁵⁰ C.P. Bhambhri, "Indian State, Social Classes and Secularism," in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 22, No. 5 / 6 (May – June, 1994), 52.

⁵¹ Bhambhri, "Indian State, Social Classes and Secularism," 52; Thakur reports: "The demolition of the mosque plunged India into the worst outbreak of communal violence since partition, with 1, 700 dead and 5,500 injured." Thakur, "Ayodhya and the Politics of India's Secularism," 645.

⁵² Paul R. Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (London: University of Washington Press, 2003), 5.

Ayodhya incidence bolstered the moral of the Hindu traditionalists and the Hindu religio-nationalists.

I.4.3. BJP Government and State Secularism

The decline of the Congress Party opened way “for the BJP to enter the political arena as a legitimate contender for power at the Center.”⁵³ In 1980 the BJP was formed; since then, it has been playing communal politics to consolidate Hindu votes to attain its religio-political goal – to capture political power and to utilise the power to fulfil its religious aspiration, i.e. to make India a Hindu nation that would be governed by Hindu principles. From the early 1990s the BJP, in tandem with *Sangh Parivar*, created a climate of religious violence against minority communities – mainly Muslims and Christians. The worst incidents of such violence were the destruction of Babri Mosque followed by communal violence against Muslims and persecution of Muslims and Christians in Gujarat (2002) and Orissa (2007-2008). In 1989, mobilizing Hindu symbols for its political goal, the BJP won 88 out of 545 total *Lok Sabha* (Lower House of the Indian Parliament) seats for the first time. In 1996 with 194 seats it emerged as largest single party in the *Lok Sabha* and formed the government in the centre for the first time in its history, but the government lasted for 13 days only.⁵⁴ However, the BJP contested the 1999 parliamentary election as a part of National Democratic Alliance (NDA) of more than twenty national and regional parties and won 182 seats. The NDA got 294 seats out of 545 *Lok Sabha* seats, clear majority to form the government. The BJP, being the largest party in the alliance, formed the government under the premiership of Atal Behari Bhajpayee;

⁵³ Shaila Seshia, “Divide and Rule in Indian Party Politics: The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party,” in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 38, No. 11 (Nov., 1998), 1040.

⁵⁴ Ramashray Roy and Paul Wallace (eds.), *Indian Politics and the 1998 Election: Regionalism, Hindutva and State Politics* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999), 16.

and this BJP led government lasted full term for the first time in its history. Since the BJP formed the government in the centre, the party

sought to systematically undermine the principles of equality guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. Among the more disturbing of these is the BJP's campaign to rewrite Indian history [...] it has worked to change the content of history texts. New school books extol the virtues of Hinduism, make dubious claims about the alleged scientific advances of the Vedic Age (Circa 1500 to 500 B.C.E.) and disparage the advent and role of Islam in South Asia.⁵⁵

In the BJP government Murli Manohar Joshi, one of the most prominent leaders of the party, was made education minister. Soon after taking office, Joshi began to appoint scholars "sympathetic to the Hindu nationalist interpretation of history of national academic bodies, including the Indian council of Historical Research, the Indian Council of Social Science Research, and the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies."⁵⁶ His government's plan was to Hinduise educational system in school by introducing Hindu texts and values to inculcate *Hindutva* (Hinduness) ideology in the mind of young Hindus and to generate religious hatred (among all Hindus) against the Muslim and Christian religious minorities in India - if the BJP succeeded in its plan, then, Hindu religious violence/terrorism against the said minorities would increase (in frequency) and spread all over India within a short span of time. If the BJP government's design was not opposed by state governments of the non-BJP ruled states, it could have succeeded in destroying "the secular fabric of the country with the introduction of specious depictions of Muslims [and Christians] as foreign collaborators and oppressors."⁵⁷ The plan was postponed due to opposition within the NDA government.

⁵⁵ Ganguly, "The Crisis of Indian Secularism," 21.

⁵⁶ Barbara D. Metcalf and Thomas R. Metcalf, *A Concise History of India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 293.

⁵⁷ Metcalf and Metcalf, *A Concise History of India*, 293.

The Gujarat riot of 2002 is the most horrifying acts of religious violence in the history of secular India. It was a serious law and order crisis in which the state government totally failed to protect the lives of the minority community. The Central government, as per the provision of the Indian Constitution, could have dismissed the state government due to its failure in maintaining law and order in the state. But, the Atal Bihari Bhajpayee-led BJP government in the Centre neither dismissed the state government nor criticised Modi; instead he was embraced as a hero of the party and permitted to campaign for fresh elections in and outside Gujarat. The communal violence against the Muslim minority of 2002 and the political aftermath in Gujarat raised “serious questions about the Indian state’s commitment to secularism.”⁵⁸ “The genocidal violence of Gujarat,” according to Needham and Rajan, is the most “serious crisis of secularism.”⁵⁹

I.5. Critique of the Secular State

As we have seen, Hindu traditionalists and Hindu nationalists worked against the secular scheme from the time India got freedom. Moreover, from the 1970s, due to the failure of successive governments to safeguard the secular values of Indian secularism, the Indian State has been accused of practising favouritism by both majority and minority communities. On the one hand, Hindu religio-nationalists argue that the Hindu Majority (which is more than four-fifth of the total population of Indian) is ruled by Muslim and Christian religious minorities through the Congress Party (a secular party, in the view of Hindu nationalists, that defends the religious rights and privileges of these minorities at the cost of Hindu majority in the name of secularism); on the other, the religious minorities express their alleged fear of Hindu domination in every plan, policy and department of the Indian government since the

⁵⁸Ganguly, “The Crisis of Indian Secularism,” 12.

⁵⁹Anuradha Dingwaney Needham and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (eds), *The Crisis of Secularism in India* (Duke University Press, 2007), 31.

dawn of independence – therefore, in the minorities’ point of view, the minorities are pushed to the periphery and, in the meantime, the (secular) Indian state failed to defend the minorities and their constitutional rights and privileges from the aggressive Hinduism in many instances.

I.5.1. Critique by *Hindutva* Based Organizations

The partition and the incidence of communal violence, in which millions of Hindus had to migrate into India due to Muslim atrocities against the Hindus in Pakistan, seemed to have worked as an approval to legitimize the Hindu traditionalists’ and Hindu nationalists’ hatred towards the Indian Muslims. They were emboldened to demand special treatment for the Hindus, i.e. India be made Hindu *Rashtra*. They were against a secularism that viewed equal rights for all religions, because they thought of equality of religions as an anathema. In their view Muslims were responsible for the partition; therefore, Muslims had no right to demand equality in India. The leaders of the Hindu *Mahasabha* and RSS organizations have openly expressed that “secularism, championed by the Nehru-Azad combine, had lost its justification in August 1947, and the conciliation and compromise with the Muslims had failed to keep India united.”⁶⁰ One of the Hindu *Mahasabha* thinkers commented that the partition of the mother land, which is *pitrubumi* and *punyabhumi* of the Hindus, was the result of Congress “blunders”.⁶¹ However, the Hindu traditionalists and Hindu nationalists had failed to realize their objective of making India a Hindu nation.

Subsequently, in 1951 the *Bharatiya Jana Sangh* (Indian People’s Party), a Hindu religious political party, was founded by the RSS members, and the RSS *pracharaks* (preachers) were

⁶⁰ Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, 137.

⁶¹ Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, 137.

given permission to serve the party.⁶² The burning vision of *Jana Sangh* was to make India a Hindu nation. According to it, “Indian society should draw increasingly on ancient Hindu traditions and rely less on Western ideas.”⁶³ In 1977 the party, joining three other parties, formed *Janata Party* (People’s Party) and got 295 seats out of 542 seats, a slim majority, in the parliament election of 1977 and formed government under the Premiership of Morarji Desai. The *Janata* Government lasted little more than two years due to a rupture in the party. In 1980 *Jana Sangh* finally established itself as the BJP under the leadership of Atal Bihari Bhajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani. The BJP’s ultimate ideology is *Hindutva* (Hinduness), and the main objectives of *Hindutva* ideology are “Hindu domination, the elimination of safeguards for minority rights, and the abrogation of the constitution”⁶⁴ – this Hindu-nationalistic “ideology has been actively involved in communal conflicts in India.”⁶⁵

For the BJP the secular state is not congenial to the Hindu majority, because the Indian state is seen by them to be favouring the minority communities at the price of the Hindu majority. The leaders of the party cite Article 370 of the Constitution that grants special status to Jammu and Kashmir, the Muslim majority state, and the Shah Bano case to demonstrate that Indian secularism is biased toward the Muslim minority at the expense of the majority. The BJP sees the Congress as pandering to religious minorities, for which it calls the Congress “pseudo-secular”.⁶⁶ According to the Hindu nationalists the Hindu identity is at risk due to the minority appeasing policies of the Congress governments. They declare that the policies of

⁶² Gwilym Beckerlegge, “Saffron and Seva: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sang’s Appropriation of Swami Vivekananda,” in *Hinduism in Public and Private: Reform, Hindutva, Gender, and Sampraday*, edited by Antony Copley (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 50.

⁶³ Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics*, 6.

⁶⁴ Basu, “Reflections on Community Conflicts”, 395.

⁶⁵ James and ‘Ozdamar, “Religion as a Factor in Ethnic Conflict,” 461.

⁶⁶ Needham and Rajan (eds), *The Crisis of Secularism in India*, 16.

the Indian government are formulated for the advantage of minority communities. This is why the secular government has become a target for the Hindu religious and religio-nationalist leaders' wrath because they see the state's policy of religious neutrality as protecting⁶⁷ Muslims, Christians and Sikhs. Therefore, the Hindu religio-nationalist leaders attempt to assimilate politics with Hindu culture. However "political and cultural integration," according to Marika Vicziany, "has been more intense with highly damaging consequences for Indian democracy and secularism."⁶⁸

I.5.2. Indian State Secularism and Christians, Sikhs and Muslims

The new religio-political developments, which surfaced from the late 1970s, challenged the Indian secular democracy. The *Janata* government's emphasis on protection of the cow during its tenure (1977-1979), the narrow party politics of the Congress governments during 1980s and 1990s, and the failure of the Indian state to uphold fundamentals of state secularism in several instances raised serious questions concerning minorities' rights and religious freedom. Further, the unrestricted Hindu communal politics of the BJP and its family seems to have further confirmed the fear that Indian state is Hindu biased.

The idea of a secular state sometimes is seen as inimical to the religious minorities (particularly Christians, Sikhs and Muslims), mainly for the following three reasons: firstly, the secular ideology is Western (which symbolizes the Colonial rule) product; secondly, it is non-religious therefore supra-religious; thirdly, the Indian secular state seems to be dominated by the Hindu majority for which the constitutional rights of the minorities are violated often

⁶⁷ Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?*, 86.

⁶⁸ Marika Vicziany, "Globalization and Hindutva: India's Experience with Global Economic and Political Integration," *Globalization in the Asian Region: Impacts and Consequences*, edited by Gloria Davies and Chris Nyland (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2004), 92.

by the Hindu majority. According to National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), a separatist ethno-religious group that is fighting for independence of Nagaland, the numberless Indian troops are forces of Hinduism that aim to destroy Christianity – Naga ethnicity and Christianity (apparently the Naga Christianity is both religious faith of the Christian Nagas and an integral part of the modern Naga culture) are inseparable from one another for the Nagas. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who was instrumental in the beginning of Sikh militancy in Punjab in 1980s, “echoed the common fear that Sikhs would lose their identity in a sea of secularism or, worse, in a flood of resurgent Hinduism.”⁶⁹ His main theme “was the survival of the Sikh community.” For the Jama'at-i-Islami of Jammu and Kashmir (JIJK), Indian secularism is un-Islamic:

Democracy, or the rule of the people, is seen as un-Islamic, for it is said to go against the Islamic understanding of God as the sovereign authority and law-maker. For the same reason, Western-style secularism, the separation of religion and politics, is condemned.⁷⁰

Apparently the Sikh, Kashmiri Muslim and Naga Christian minorities have to struggle – against the aggressive Hinduism and *Hindutva* elements that threaten to do away with the safeguards of minority rights⁷¹ and subjugate the minorities under Hindu rule – for the preservation of their distinct ethno-religious identity that they fear might be lost in the ocean of Hinduism. In this struggle of survival they could not rely on the Indian state due to its failure to protect their constitutional rights from the Hindus’ attack in several occasions; rather, the state (to the given minorities) seems to represent a different manifestation of Hinduism that seeks to systematically eliminate the minorities’ ethno-religious identities. The above-stated concerns might have bolstered the religious and ethno-religio-nationalist

⁶⁹ Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?*, 94.

⁷⁰ Sikand, “The Emergence and Development of the Jama’at-i-Islami,” 707.

⁷¹ See Basu, “Reflections on Community Conflicts”, 395.

extremist elements within the minority communities to inspire and marshal their concerned religious constituency for holy war against their avowed enemies – the state and the Hindu majority.

I.6. An Assessment

For centuries India has been the home of various ethnic and ethno-religious communities. In the case of Sikhs, Nagas and Kashmiri Muslims, ethnic and religious identities are inseparable from each other; therefore, both identities are to be defended at any price. However, these minorities fear losing their identities owing to the nature of Indian secularism, the rising tide of Hindu communal politics and Hindu religious hatred against them. This apprehension is most likely to provide sufficient incentive for the rise and furtherance of ethno-religious nationalism and ethno-religious-nationalist conflicts. Meanwhile, the Hindu majority view these minorities as serious threats to the Hindu dharma-and-race, allegedly because of minorities' missionary activities and the minority favouring Indian state.

Besides ethnic and ethno-religious problems and concerns, there are other factors that could have supplied further incentive in the rise of religious terrorism in India with reference to the Sikhs, Kashmiri Muslims, Nagas and Hindus. In addition to socio-historical experiences (which will be assessed in the case studies), the Sikhs, Kashmiri Muslims and Nagas seem to have undergone political and military repression right after the Indian independence; at the same time they have been pushed to the periphery by majority Hindu-dominated Indian politics. Further, the Naga-dominated regions and Kashmir lagged behind in economic development compared to other regions of India. Though Punjab was economically more advanced than other regions because of the Green Revolution, many Sikhs of Punjab – particularly the Sikh farmers – were antagonized due to the central government's policy (will

be reviewed in the second chapter). Evidently the above-mentioned factors could have provoked certain sections of the ethno-religious groups to seek political autonomy or independence for the minority dominated regions. Whereas, any form of geo-political demand of the religious minorities could pose a serious threat to the Hindu nation, the holy land for the Hindus; therefore, the majority religious community would not take the given intention of the ethno-religious minorities lightly because, it involves the foundation of their religious identity. Thus, religion seems to be main inspirational factor in the rise of religious terrorism in India; however, historical and socio-political concerns and issues are profoundly interconnected with religion in this regard – the case studies in the following chapters will evaluate the extent to which religion, historical context and socio-political factors are interrelated, and in what way they contribute to the rise and sustenance of religious terrorism. When religion is intensely involved in the conflicts between the majority and minority religious communities religious ideology/ideologies is/are certain to play significant role in mobilization of the given religious constituency/constituencies for religious terror against the conceived enemies. In this regard religious texts and symbols that represent the violent phase of religion could be managed by religious actors to trigger off inner passion among the followers of each given religion for religious war/violence/terrorism. The case studies will analyse how religious texts and symbols are being manipulated by each conflicting religious communities to inspire religious violence and terrorism.

Furthermore, Indian secularism appears to be under intense pressure from the communal elements, and if this trend continues, then, the Indian secular democracy could be totally undermined by the forces that nurture religious terrorism. Therefore, it is imperative to find a possible and practicable solution to contain these destructive forces that threaten to bring down the existing socio-political structure of the Indian nation. For this reason the seventh

chapter makes an attempt to propose a framework towards communal reconciliation and conflict resolution for social harmony in the Indian society; however, I do not make any effort to do an exhaustive study in proposing the framework for conflict resolution, rather I initiate a model which requires further and in-depth research.

I.7. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that there had been religious animosity between the majority Hindu and minority (particularly Muslim) religious communities from the pre-partition period; therefore, the British India was divided into two sovereign nations on religious ground. The given religious hostility became intensified in the time of partition for which there occurred, in the newly born and newly liberated states, one of the most horrifying incidence of communal genocide and one of the worst social turmoil in the known history of mankind. Moreover, the communal riots seem to have inculcated long-lasting religious antagonism among certain sections of the conflicting religious communities in India, and this antagonism gradually got boosted in the post-independent period due to new socio-religious and political developments: failure of Hindu religio-nationalists to make India a Hindu nation; granting of equal religious rights and privileges to the minorities in the Indian Constitution; granting of special status to Muslim majority state (Jammu and Kashmir); geo-political, linguistic and other demands of the Sikh, Muslim and Christian minorities; decline in popularity of the Congress Party, which stood as a central pillar of Indian secular democracy; manipulation of religion for political purposes by the leaders of the secular parties; and rise of communal political forces and unrestrained communalisation and religionization of politics and politicization of religion – with the unrestricted communalisation and religionization of politics the foundation of the socio-political structure of Indian state and society began to quake and, in the meantime, the existing good-will, communal harmony and trust among the

concerned religious communities began to fall-apart piece by piece. Besides, there are other factors (such as Naga insurgency and missionary activities of Christians, Muslims and Hindus) that added more force to the existing religious hatred among the conflicting sections of the Indian society. So, this chapter underscores: the intricate relationship between religion and political factors; the increasing influence and pressure of religion on the Indian politics from the time of Indian independence; and the building up of aggressive communal attitude among the conflicting communities from the 1970s. These points provide better understanding of the weight of religion in the rise of the religious terrorism in India.

The socio-historical and political backgrounds of the religious concerns and problems of the conflicting communities, issues and demands of the minorities, rise of communal political parties and unrestrained communalisation and religionization of politics (and vice versa), failure of Indian state to protect the Constitutional rights of the minorities from aggressive Hindu majority will be assessed in the case studies in the following chapters. In the meantime, the case studies will demonstrate how religion, on the basis of historical and socio-political factors, played significant role in motivation and mobilization of the given religious constituency for religious terror. The following chapter will present a case study of Sikh religious terrorism.

CHAPTER II

SIKH RELIGIOUS TERRORISM

II.1. Introduction

Terrorist violence in Punjab seriously threatened the stability and unity of the Indian nation and society from early 1980s to 1993. Various socio-economic and geo-political issues are taken into account by different scholars to explain the cause of the terrorist problem in Punjab. Some of those socio-economic and geo-political issues are: ethno-territorial identity; draining of the region's resources by the Central government; "the more favourable terms of trade for industrial-sector goods; the limitations of the Green Revolution technology in further raising farm outputs; growing inequalities in the countryside; the problems of unemployed youth; and the shrinking electoral base of the Akali Dal."¹ However, the credibility of Sikh religious ideologies, based on religio-historical symbols, radically designed for the reaffirmation and preservation of given ethno-religious and cultural identity as well as ethno-religious territory has not garnered weight in these explanations. Thus, in this chapter I will make an attempt to explain that, in contrary to the existing explanations, religio-historical symbols and experiences and socio-political environment in inseparable alliance with radical Sikh religious ideologies inspired terrorism in Punjab. Furthermore, this case study will venture to define Sikh terrorism as Sikh religious terrorism. Therefore, Sikh terrorism has to be studied together with Islamic militancy in Kashmir, Naga insurgency and Hindu extremism that seem to be nurtured by religious ideologies forged by radical religious leaders (such as

¹ Harjot S. Oberoi, "From Punjab to 'Khalistan': Territoriality and Metacommentary," in *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (Spring, 1987), 41.

Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale) on the basis of (the concepts) *miri-piri*² and ordination of *Khalsa Panth* by the tenth Sikh guru³.

This chapter is arranged in the following manner. Firstly, some of the existing theories in the rise of the terrorism are reviewed very briefly. Secondly, an assessment of the historical context of the Sikh religious tradition is presented. In this section the formation of the Sikh *Panth* (community), formation of the *Khalsa* (pure) *Panth* and the short lived fulfilment of the political aspiration of *Khalsa Panth* are analysed. The study of the historical context attempts to highlight the socio-political environment in which Sikhism took its birth and how it transformed in the course of its history and reached the present stage. Further, the study aspires to investigate the basis of the modern Sikh ethno-religious identity. Thirdly, I survey the Sikh resurgent movements that began in the second half of the nineteenth century, to underline how *Khalsa* identity is associated with modern Sikh identity. Fourthly, the post-1947 Sikh socio-political issues, that provoked Sikhs against the Central government, are discussed. Fifthly, an evaluation on post-1966 Sikh religio-political concerns, economic progress and its effect on Sikh religious society is tendered. Sixthly, a study in the rise of Sikh terrorism is presented. Under this topic I discuss the Sikh movement for reaffirmation of Sikh identity, the rise of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale as a prominent religious leader, and his theology. The main focus of this section is to underline the role of radical theological ideology in the rise and sustenance of Sikh terrorism in Punjab. Seventhly, terrorist violence in the pre-Blue-star and post-Blue-star phases is reviewed. Finally, an assessment of the Sikh Religious Terrorism and conclusion are offered.

² See Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 94.

³ See *Struggle for Justice: Speeches and Conversation of Sant Jarnail Singh Khalsa Bhindranwale*, translated from Punjabi audio and video recordings by Ranbir Singh Sandhu (Dublin: Sikh Education & Religious Foundation, 1999), 336. Henceforth, Sandhu (trans.), *Struggle for Justice*.

II.2. Various Theoretical Standpoints on the Rise of the Sikh Terrorism

There are several theoretical viewpoints put forward by various intellectuals on the rise of the Punjab problem. These views can be arranged into five categories: first, views expressed in the Government of India's (GOI's) *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation*; second, socio-economic factors responsible in the rise of the problem; third, the conception of Sikhs as an ethnic nation gave rise to the separatist movement; fourth, political machinations of the Congress Party orchestrated the Sikh problem;⁴ and, fifth, the communal factor, i.e., the Hindu idea of social system,⁵ was involved in the rise of the problem. However, in the following sections I will critically analyse the opinion expressed in the GOI's White Paper and the argument that socio-economic factors are responsible in the rise of the problem.

II.2.1. Involvement of External Forces

External forces, particularly Pakistan, are blamed for the breeding and aggravation of the Sikh extremism in Punjab in the Government of India's *Whiter Paper on the Punjab Agitation*. According to the GOI's White Paper, a strong nexus between the *Akali Dal* agitation and the "virulent communalism bred by extremism and the secessionist and anti-national activities of a small group, largely supported by external elements"⁶ (allegedly the Sikh Diaspora of North America, Britain and Europe, and the Pakistani Government) with deep rooted interest in the disintegration of India gave rise to Sikh terrorism in Punjab. The main objectives of the extremist violence, as identified in the White Paper, was to create division among the people

⁴ Cynthia Keppley Mahmood, "Sikh Rebellion and the Hindu Concept of Order," in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Mar., 1989), 329-331.

⁵ Mahmood, "Sikh Rebellion and the Hindu Concept of Order," 336- 340.

⁶ "Text of the White Paper on the Punjab Agitation Issued on 10 July 1984," in *The Story of Punjab: Yesterday and Today* (Documents, Treaties and Exhaustive Bibliography), Edited by Varinder Grover, Second Edition, Vol.III (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications PVT. LTD., 1999), 335; also see Mahmood, "Sikh Rebellion and the Hindu Concept of Order," 329.

of Punjab (which might mean division in communal line) and destruction of common culture of Punjab.⁷ The above estimation of the Indian government raise several questions: if the government was aware of the involvement of external elements, then, why did it take more than four years for the government to act against the Sikh extremists? Why was Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who was arrested on 20th September 1981 in connection with the murder of Lala Jagat Narain, released from jail? How were weapons smuggled in large quantities within the Golden Temple complex though there was a continuous presence of police and other security personnel outside the temple complex? There are no answers to these questions in the Government White Paper.⁸ The GOI's statements do not explain the real cause of the problem; therefore, it plainly signifies that these views are presented only to defend the Congress government and to justify the military action against the Golden Temple.

II.2.2. Socio-Economic Aspects Responsible in the Rise of the Problem

Scholars (such as Joyce Pettigrew), who consider economic factors as the main cause of the problem, are of the opinion that the Green Revolution wrought social tension in Punjab, because the Green Revolution created rich, middle and poor classes of farmers.⁹ Hence, the rise of a rich class of farmers prepared a way for increasing competition between the rich farmers and the wealthy Hindu merchants in the cities; and in the competition the farmers were most likely to feel that their interest was at risk due to the Hindu dominated central government. In the meantime, the central government tried to manipulate the communal situation in Punjab.

⁷ "Text of the White Paper on the Punjab Agitation Issued on 10 July 1984," 335.

⁸ See "Text of the Speech made by Sh. Parvathaneni Upendra on White Paper in Rajya Sabha on 25 July 1984," in *The Story of Punjab: Yesterday and Today* (Documents, Treaties and Exhaustive Bibliography), Edited by Varinder Grover, Second Edition, Vol.III (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications PVT. LTD., 1999), 372.

⁹ Mahmood, "Sikh Rebellion and the Hindu Concept of Order," 330.

The agrarian community of Punjab, in the view of Pettigrew, became aware of the injustice being done to them by the central government through its planning and policy that effect their agricultural production.¹⁰ On account of the government planning and water regulation policy, observes Pettigrew, there was scarcity of water for irrigation, shortage of diesel and high transportation cost, shortage of electric power, dearth of other technological tools for farming, and higher production costs compared to procurement costs that led to indebtedness in some cases. Thus, the farmers had a strong desire to free themselves from the state policies that affected functioning of their farmlands. Consequently, in the 1970s the farmers began a non-violent campaign for autonomy through peaceful demonstrations organized both in the State Assembly and in the rural areas. The outcome of this, according to Pettigrew, was the Anandpur Sahib Resolution (1973). The purpose of this Resolution was to seek rectification of socio-economic grievances of the Punjab region. When the socio-economic grievances listed in the Resolution went unheard, observes Pettigrew, other issues were added and then the Punjab issue, through the preaching of Bhindranwale, took national importance. Pettigrew, in corroboration of her viewpoint, writes: “socio-economic issues indeed emerge in a number of interviews with members of the Khalistan Commando Force.”¹¹ These interviews are included in her book *The Sikhs of the Punjab*.

The argument that socio-economic aspects were responsible for the rise of the Sikh terrorism has two major problems: first, this argument tends to ignore the historical background of the socio-religious and cultural grievances of the Sikh religious community; and second, it does not take into consideration the religio-political and linguistic struggle of the Sikh community from the time of Indian independence. Furthermore, researchers interested in socio-economic

¹⁰ Joyce J. M. Pettigrew, *The Sikhs of the Punjab: Unheard Voices of State and Guerrilla Violence* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1995), 5-6.

¹¹ Pettigrew, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 6.

issues seem to rely on the recent socio-economic and political developments that began from the late 1960s, to explain the problem of Sikh terrorism. Therefore, the socio-economic theory is incomplete and unsatisfactory.

Management of radical Sikh religious ideologies in justification of violence to seek justice for the Sikh religious community basing on the religio-historical experiences and symbols and the socio-political grievances of the community could have played the most important role in the motivation and mobilization of Sikh religious constituency towards religious terrorism. In the meantime, it is most likely that religious revival and communal factors had inculcated a strong religious passion among many young Sikhs to fight a just battle for the cause of the Sikh ethno-cultural-religious identity, which had been the matter of great concern for many religious Sikhs from the second half of the nineteenth century. Whereas, the above-reviewed socio-economic and geo-political issues and developments appeared to have further corroborated the concern or fear that the Sikh ethno-cultural-religious identity was in grave danger.

II.3. Historical context

To understand the fundamental basis of radical Sikh religious ideology it is necessary to review the origin and growth of Sikhism, Sikh community and Sikh religious symbols. Apparently contradictory characteristics – love and violence – are present in Sikhism too. To highlight these dual characteristics in Sikhism it is imperative to assess briefly the relevant features of the historical context of Sikhism.

II.3.1. Guru Nanak and Formation of Sikh Community

Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was born in the Punjab in 1469– Nanak was Hindu by birth. The Punjab during Nanak's time was under the influence of both *bhakti* (the Hindu

reformation movement in north India) Hinduism¹² and Sufism (Islamic mysticism). The spiritual quest of Nanak could not be fulfilled by either of the religious systems because the mystery, according to Nanak, could neither be found in the *Vedas* nor in the *Quran*. For him the then-existing socio-political institutions, because of the prevalent practice of rampant discrimination and corruption, were not delivering justice to the people. According to Grewal, a thorough inspection of Guru Nanak's hymns (*bani*) makes it clear that Nanak could find hardly anything approvable in the contemporary politics.¹³ Therefore, Nanak denounced contemporary beliefs and practices and "sought to transcend Islam and Hinduism by creating a new religion"¹⁴ for new social order that would be neither "Hindu" nor "Muslim". Furthermore, in such a social system Nanak determined that none should be discriminated as high (*uttam*) and low (*nich*) on the basis of one's birth.

The message of the new religious system, which Nanak preached, is centred on a formless Ultimate Reality that bestows grace upon all, "through the spiritual True Guru, who is the manifestation of His message to humanity."¹⁵ He proclaimed that those who seek to attain union with God (*Vahiguru*) have to follow three important rules – *nam*, *dan* and *isnan*. *Nam* is the meditation of "Divine Name". This comprises of "the total being and nature of Akal Purakh or God."¹⁶ One might be able to know about the fundamental doctrine of Nanak by

¹² According to David N. Lorenzen, "In the context of north India, all Sikhs as well as almost all Hindus may be called followers of bhakti religion since their dominant mode of worship is one of 'devotion' (bhakti) toward a divine being." David N. Lorenzen, "Introduction - The Historical Vicissitudes of Bhakti Religion," in *Bhakti Religion in North India: Community, Identity and Political Action*, edited by David N. Lorenzen (New York: State University of New York, 1995), 1.

¹³ J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, revised edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 28.

¹⁴ Gurharpal Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India: A Case-Study of Punjab* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press LTD, 2000), 80.

¹⁵ C. Shackle, *The Sikhs* (London: Minority Rights Group Report, No. 65), 3; quoted in Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 80.

¹⁶ W.H. McLeod, *Who is a Sikh? The Problem of Sikh Identity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1.

elaborating this one word. This divine name has the power to release human beings from the cycle of birth and death; therefore, the devotee must realise “the reality of the *nam*” and endeavour “to bring one’s own being into complete conformity with it.”¹⁷ *Dan* is alms-giving, and *isnan* is living a pure life. Among the three words *nam* is the nucleus and other two expand its meaning. Another version of this religious formula, which is popular among the Sikhs, is *nam japo, kirt karo, vand cako*,¹⁸ meaning “devotion and adoration of the ‘Divine Name’, hard work, and the sharing of rewards of one’s labour with others.”¹⁹

From the end of 15th century Nanak’s message began to attract a following from all walks of life and formed a community, originally known as Nanak-*Panth*. The word “*Panth*” literally means “path” or “way”. This term “has traditionally been used to designate the followers of a particular teacher or of a distinctive range of doctrine.”²⁰ Thus, the early followers of Nanak were identified as Nanak-*panthis* as well as Sikhs, meaning learners. Nanak, before his death, appointed Lahina, renamed Angad,²¹ his successor and the second guru from among his closest followers for the perpetuation, guidance and development of the Sikh community and Sikh faith. The line of human gurus continued till the life time of the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), who finally closed the era of human gurus.

¹⁷ McLeod, *Who is a Sikh?*, 2; also see Louis E. Fenech, “Martyrdom and the Execution of Guru Arjan in Early Sikh Sources,” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 121, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 2001), 20f.

¹⁸ Khuswant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 47.

¹⁹ Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 80.

²⁰ McLeod, *Who is a Sikh?*, 7.

²¹ “Guru Angad’s period we know very little that can be accepted with anything approaching assurance and we can only assume that the constituency and discipline of the *Panth* must have followed the pattern established under Nanak.” W. H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 7.

II.3.2. Transformation of Sikhism: Formation of *Khalsa Panth*

As the time passed by the followers of Sikh faith began to increase and by the time of Guru Arjun (1563-1606), the fifth guru, Sikhism was rooted firmly in the central districts of the Punjab. This development (the increasing number of Sikh followers) initiated the building of *Harimandir* (the Golden Temple) in Amritsar and the compilation of the *Adi Granth* (Sikh Holy Scripture) to mark and formalize the growth of the Sikh community. But, the progress and spread of the Sikh faith was not acceptable to the Muslim Emperor, Jahangir. Therefore, to frustrate the spread of Sikhism and the growing popularity of the guru himself, the Emperor arrested Guru Arjun and ordered him to be tortured to death in 1606.²² The execution of Guru Arjun was the turning point in the history of Sikh faith. This incidence was the genesis of the “transformation of Sikhism from pacifist reformers to the militant *Khalsa*”.²³

The process of change in Sikhism was inaugurated by the sixth guru, Guru Hargobind (1595-1644). The young Hargobind set on his father’s seat “with two swords”, one symbolizing spiritual (*miri*) authority and other temporal (*piri*) power. To encourage his followers in military activity he built a fortress called *Lohgarh* (an iron castle), and the *Akal Takht* (the immortal throne). In the *Akal Takht* the devotees listened to “ballads extolling feats of heroism, and ... discussed plans of military conquests.”²⁴ It was at this time that the concept of “saint-soldier” had emerged in Sikhism²⁵ and made the Sikh *Panth* more than a gathering of

²² Singh, *A History of the Sikhs I*, 60.

²³ Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 80.

²⁴ Singh, *A History of the Sikhs I*, 63.

²⁵ K.P.S. Gill, *Punjab: The Knights of Falsehood* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1997), 114.

the devotees. Thereafter, the guru exercised “an authority more expansive than that of his predecessors”.²⁶

The shift which commenced with the sixth guru reached its zenith during the time of Guru Gobind who established two new ordinances that became the basis for modern Sikh identity, due to: constant and cruel persecution faced by the Sikhs in the hands of the Muslim rulers; regular attacks on the Sikh institutions; and, schism within the Sikh religious community owing to the rivalry for *guruship*. Firstly, he instituted the *Khalsa*²⁷ (pure) at Anandpur on the first of *Baisakh* (New Year) in 1699; and secondly, he “gave the institution of *Guruship* a permanent and abiding character by vesting it in the immortality of the *Granth*.”²⁸ These acts of Guru Gobind had provided a concrete model for unity of the Sikh community in the face of both internal (factionalism within Sikhism) and external challenges.

Thenceforth, the *Khalsa* became a Sikh religious-community that would unflinchingly take up the responsibility of defence of the Sikhs. Meanwhile, Guru Gobind prescribed five symbols to be kept by the *Khalsa* to uphold distinct Sikh identity. The five symbols begin with letter “k” – *kes* (wearing unshorn hair and beard), *kangha* (a comb), *kach* (a knee-length pair of breeches), *kara* (a steel bracelet) and *kirpan* (a sword or sabre).²⁹ “Among the five symbols, *kes* symbolizes ascetic character of a person because from antiquity Indian ascetics have been accustomed of keeping unshorn hair, whereas *kach*, *kara* and *kirpan* signify martial or militant feature. Within very short period the *Khalsa Panth* gave birth to thousands of

²⁶ McLeod, *Who is a Sikh?*, 24.

²⁷ See McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, 14-15.

²⁸ J.S. Grewal, *The Akalis: A Short History* (Chandigarh: Punjab Studies Publications, 1996), 87. Henceforth Grewal, *The Akalis*.

²⁹ Singh, *A History of the Sikhs I*, 86; Paropkar Singh Puri, “The Rational of Sikh Symbols,” [Article online], available from <http://www.sikhreview.org/pdf/may2010/pdf-files>; Internet accessed: 23 May 2012.

“bearded, beturbanned, fully armed” people, who possessed “a crusader’s zeal to build a new commonwealth”³⁰ or Sikh nation.

The purpose of instituting the *Khalsa panth* could not be more than the establishment of the kingdom of the Immortal God (*Vahiguru*), i.e. the realm of spiritual sovereignty – according to Banerjee, “neither the *Bachittar Natak*” (Guru Gobind’s Autobiography) “nor the *Zafarnama*” (Epistle of Victory) contains any proof that Guru Gobind intended or foretold “the establishment of the temporal sovereignty of the *Panth*”.³¹ However, the episode of the sacrificial enactment and the baptism of the *Khalsa* at Anandpur, and use of weapons by the guru himself enjoined fresh religious ideals and values and generated consciousness among the *Khalsa* Sikhs to transcend the existing religious and theological perception in the given socio-political context.

II.3.3. Realization of *Khalsa* Aspiration

Guru Gobind, the innovator of modern Sikh identity, died in 1708. With his death ended the line of human gurus in Sikhism. However, the *Khalsa Panth*, his new innovation, began its fresh religio-political adventure. Banda Bahadur, one of the guru’s most trusted followers, with the *Khalsa* army, started militant activity against the Mogul rulers in the Punjab. Banda (slave), according to Khushwant Singh, was equipped for the military exploits by Guru Gobind Singh himself. The Guru, he writes, armed him “with five arrows from his quiver and gave him his own standard and battle drum” and “issued orders (*hukamnamas*) to the Sikhs, urging them to volunteer for service.”³²

³⁰ Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* I, 90.

³¹ A.C. Banerjee, *The Khalsa Raj* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1985), 19.

³² Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* I, 102.

The original purpose of the armed struggle was to avenge the murder of the guru's two younger sons and the death of the guru himself. This limited goal was soon expanded for gaining political sovereignty for the Sikhs. It was during this time the *Khalsa* first raised the slogan: "*Raj Karega Khalsa yaqi rahe na koi ...* (The *Khalsa* shall rule, no opponent shall exist.)".³³ The slogan, which is an important part of the Sikh prayer now, "was composed and first sung by the *Khalsa* during the days of Banda."³⁴ This aspiration of the *Khalsa* materialized (implicitly and explicitly) in two different periods of the Sikh history: firstly, during the brief career of Banda's military exploits against the Moguls, i.e. from 1709 to 1715; and secondly, in the period extending from 1769 to 1849. Banda could be the first Sikh leader to think of establishing a temporal realm for the Sikhs; however, the period of Ranjit Singh's (1799-1839) rule can be termed as the golden age³⁵ of *Khalsa Panth*. It was during this time the *Khalsa*'s objective that "the *Khalsa* shall rule" was fulfilled explicitly even though Ranjit Singh's kingship, in real sense, was not a Sikh theocracy. According to Surjeet, Ranjit Singh's

Kingdom comprised entire territory between the Indus and the Sutlej. Though a monarch, Ranjit Singh was a benevolent ruler. He treated all religions alike, though he himself was devout Sikh. This was the period of Sikh glory and it had its impact on the thinking of Sikh masses.³⁶

³³ S.S. Gandhi, *History of the Sikh Gurus* (Delhi: 1978), 465; quoted in A.C. Banerjee, *The Khalsa Raj* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1985), 32.

³⁴ Banerjee, *The Khalsa Raj*, 32. According to Khushwant Singh, "The lines *Raj Kare ga Khalsa* [the *Khalsa* shall rule] are not found in the *Dasam Granth* but are by tradition ascribed to Guru Gobind Singh. They are repeated every time after the supplicatory prayer, the *ardas*." Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* I, 90.

³⁵ Harkisahn Singh Surjeet, *Deepening Punjab Crisis: Democratic Solution* (New Delhi: Patriotic Publishers, 1992), 13.

³⁶ Surjeet, *Deepening Punjab Crisis*, 13.

II.4. Identity Crisis and Sikh Resurgence after the Collapse of Sikh Empire

The political success of the *Khalsa Panth*, in actuality, concluded with the demise of Ranjit Singh. Within a decade of Ranjit's death the Sikh empire disintegrated as a result of the rivalry among the successors of Ranjit Singh. This chapter of the Sikh kingdom was finally closed with the annexation of Punjab in 1849 by the British government. With the fall of the Sikh Empire there began a gradual decline of Sikhism, particularly of the *Khalsa Panth*. Thenceforth, the Sikh religious community faced serious challenges from within and without.

Within the community there existed different sects - *Udasi*, *Nirmala*, *Ram Dasi*, *Nirankari*, *Kuka* or *Namdhari*, *Sarvaria*, etc.,³⁷ and among them *Namdhari* and *Nirankari* were the notable ones. These sects, particularly the *Namdhari* and the *Nirankari*, differed from the *Khalsa Panth* on certain important precepts concerning the gurus and the *Guru Granthsahib* because; the *Namdharis* and *Nirankaris* acknowledge "a continuing line of Gurus."³⁸ Often the members of these sects would not differentiate Sikhism from Hinduism. Besides, the Sikh community has been mostly divided into *Amritdhari* (baptised), *Keshdhari* (those who keep uncut beard and hair), *Sahajdhari* (those who cut their beard and hair), and *Patit* (impure/fallen) Sikhs. To be *Khalsa* Sikh one has to be *Amritdhari* Sikh.

There were two main external forces responsible for the decline of Sikhism. One of them was the Christian missionary activities. Soon after the annexation several Christian organizations, supposedly with the active support of British officials, began their missionary activities in the Punjab with the aim of gaining converts. Due to the Christian Missionary venture many Sikhs, including educated ones and those belonging to aristocratic families, were converted to

³⁷ See Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 24.

³⁸ Mcleod, *Who is a Sikh?*, 63-4.

Christianity, and the Christian population began to grow rapidly.³⁹ Mostly Sikh leaders were alarmed as a result of the conversion to Christianity of learned and aristocratic families.⁴⁰

The second force was the missionary activity of the *Arya Samaj*, a Hindu reformation movement. The threat of the missionary undertaking of the *Samaj* was more serious. Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of the *Samaj*, arrived in the Punjab in 1877 and opened a branch of the *Samaj* at Lahore to begin his Hinduisation enterprise in Punjab. Dayananda attacked the very foundation of Sikhism by denouncing the gurus as men of little knowledge and by rejecting primary importance of the *Granth*. According to him, Nanak was a “*dambhi* (hypocrite)” and the Sikh theologians were *maha murkhs* (great fools) due to their “ignorance of Sanskrit” language.⁴¹ Following the outlook of Dayananada, his fanatical followers sought to convert Sikhs into Hinduism. Meanwhile many Sikhs became Hindu because of the *Suddhi* (purification) campaign of the *Samaj*. This religious policy of the *Samaj* created a breach in the sustained cordial relationship between the Sikhs and Hindus.

Consequently, prominent Sikhs felt an urgent need to safeguard the purity of Sikhism and Sikh identity ordained by their gurus. Thus, they called a meeting of likeminded Sikhs in Amritsar as a result of which there came into existence an association known as the *Sri Guru Singh Sabha* in 1873; later on other *Singh Sabhas* were established in different parts of Punjab. Furthermore, in 1919 Sikh leaders founded the Central-Sikh League to achieve “immediate and long-term” religio-political objectives.⁴² The objectives were: to rebuild the

³⁹ See Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* (1839-1988), vol. II (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), 137. Henceforth Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* II.

⁴⁰ Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* II, 138.

⁴¹ Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* II, 138.

⁴² Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 157.

demolished wall of Rakabganj *Gurdwara*, in Delhi; to put the *Khalsa* College, in Amritsar, under the management of the representatives of the Sikh *Panth*; to free all *gurdwaras* (in the Punjab and other parts of India) from the hands of the *Mahants*; and to motivate the Sikhs to take active part in the movement for India's independence. The League achieved the first two goals within a short time. Also, the urgent concern of the League to liberate the Golden Temple and the *Akal Takht* and to place them in the care of a representative body of the Sikhs resulted in the establishment of two important organizations, the *Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak* Committee (SGPC) and the *Shiromani Akali Dal* (SAD), within a year. These organizations were to play fundamental role in the Sikh history after 1920 (the year they were founded).

However, one of the most difficult challenges the resurgent Sikhism faced was liberation of *gurdwaras*. After the fall of the Sikh Kingdom the *gurdwaras* gradually fell into the control of "hereditary *Mahants*". These *Mahants* were *Udasis* who lived like ordinary Hindus.⁴³ They neglected the Sikh religious duties (such as the observation of five Ks) and took hold of the properties attached to the Sikh sacred places, and introduced extravagant religious ceremonies replacing simple form of the Sikh religious rituals.

The SGPC and the SAD, with the support of the Sikh League, began a non-violent movement- which, according to Singh, "turned into the 'third Sikh War'"⁴⁴ – against the British government and the *Mahants* to free their holy places. They organized and employed bands of unarmed Sikh volunteers known as *jathas* in the struggle. After half a decade of

⁴³ Mcleod, *Who is a Sikh?*, 88-9. According Gurharpal Singh, the *Mahants* were Hindu Priests. Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 83. According to Ian Copland, Mahants were the Udasis, who did not "observe the five Ks." Ian Copland, "The Masters and the Maharajas: The Sikh Princes and the East Punjab Massacres of 1947," in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (July, 2002), 666.

⁴⁴ Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 83. Also, see Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 159.

struggle and with the loss of four hundred Sikh lives,⁴⁵ the Sikh reformers succeeded in liberating all of their places of worship – “One must, therefore, understand the Gurdwara Reform Movement not simply as a political or religious activity but as the stage upon which the ritual of martyrdom was played out,” says Fenech. This success could be termed as “a great religio-political victory” achieved by the Sikhs against the British government and the *Mahants* and their Hindu supporters. Finally, on 25 July in 1925 “the Sikh Gurdwara Act” was passed recognizing the SGPC. Since then the SGPC has been the custodian of all the important Sikh places of worship in Punjab.

Hence, the Sikh reformation movement, which began in the latter half of the nineteenth century, was – both directly and indirectly – instrumental in giving rise to two of the most prominent Sikh organizations, the SGPC and the *Shiromani Akali Dal* which have been playing vital role in the Sikh religion and politics since they were founded. SGPC represents the spiritual (*miri*) and SAD represents temporal (*piri*) authorities of the Sikh *Panth* (community).

II.5. Post-1947 Sikh Issues

SAD and SGPC played an essential role in the freedom struggle of India. In the freedom struggle many Sikhs sacrificed their lives and property. In addition to the loss of lives and property, they had to bear the pain of partition of Punjab.⁴⁶ The partition was the most horrifying nightmare for most of the Sikhs, particularly those in the West Punjab. Tens of thousands of Sikhs lost their lives, land and property – Punjabi Hindus and Muslims both suffered the same fate. The partition not only wrought death, suffering and misery upon the

⁴⁵ Louis E. Fenech, *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition : Playing the Game of Love* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 227.

⁴⁶ See Mark Tully & Satish Jacob, *Amritsar: Mrs. Gandhi's Last Battle* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1985), 35.

Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims, but it divided the sacred spaces of Sikhs between the two independent territories – e.g., around twenty five historical *gurdwaras*, including the Nankana Sahib (the *gurdwara* built on the birth place of Guru Nanak, one of the most sacred places of the Sikhs), went over to Pakistan.⁴⁷

However, the struggle of the Sikh community, particularly the *Akalis*, did not cease with the partition and independence of India.⁴⁸ Seemingly the sacrifices the Sikh community made for the cause of Indian independence and the promises made to the Sikh community by the leaders of the Congress Party, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, were simply ignored. Gandhi in 1939 assured the Sikh community that the Congress party would never betray Sikhs. Nehru too, in 1946, in more affirming manner said:

The brave Sikhs of Punjab are entitled to special consideration. I see nothing wrong in an area and a set up in the north wherein the Sikhs can also experience the glow of freedom.⁴⁹

The independence of India neither solved the long-standing socio-religious concerns of the Sikhs, nor could the Sikhs “experience the glow of freedom” as assured by Gandhi and Nehru.⁵⁰ Instead, they became a minority under the dominant Hindu majority – in 1951 the Sikh population was about 35% and the Hindu over 62% in the Punjab.⁵¹ So, after independence the Hindu community became the dominant majority in both the centre and the region. Fearing such a situation before independence, Sikh leaders had suggested to Lord

⁴⁷ “Historical Gurdwaras of Pakistan: Nankana Sahib,” in Historical Gurdwaras (Article online); http://www.sgpc.net/historical-gurdwaras/Pakistan_gurdwaras.html; Internet accessed: 3 August 2010; Tully & Jacob, *Amritsar*, 35.

⁴⁸ According K P S Gill, independence of India only changed the masters of the Sikhs – “black for white”. See K P S Gill, *Punjab: The Knights of Falsehood* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications Pvt.Ltd, 1997), 35.

⁴⁹ Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* II, 291.

⁵⁰ See Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* II, 291.

⁵¹ Grewal, *The Akalis*, 112.

Mountbatten that, “either the Constituent Assembly should give weightage to the Sikhs in the new constitution or the Hindi-speaking areas of the East Punjab should be separated from its Punjabi-speaking areas.”⁵² The second proposal was totally unacceptable to Nehru and the first could not find room in the constitution of a federal republic with parliamentary democracy. Due to non-acceptance of their demand the Sikh members of the Constituent Assembly refused to sign the draft constitution which was adopted on 26 January, 1950. Hence, the aspirations of the Sikh community remained unrealised and their long-standing problems unresolved.

Besides, the language dispute in Punjab took a serious turn, and this problem further widened the relationship gap between Sikhs and Hindus. Though the government tried to deal with the controversy by implementing three different formulae from 1949 to 1966,⁵³ the controversy deepened further mainly due to communalization and politicization of languages by the Hindu nationalists, the *Akalis* and the Congress. The government formulae failed because the *Arya Samaj* refused to accept Punjabi in *Gurmukhi* or *Devanagari* as medium of instruction in the institutions in those areas where it had its stronghold. The language dispute seems to have clearly divided the people of Punjab along communal lines: the Punjabi Hindus, who were persuaded to opt for Hindi in *Devanagari* script instead of Punjabi, their mother tongue; the Sikhs, who strongly advocated for Punjabi in *Gurmukhi* script. The argument against Punjabi in *Gurmukhi* was that, *Gurmukhi* was the religious script of the Sikhs; and, therefore, to the Hindus “it was in fact a communally motivated demand.”⁵⁴

⁵² Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 182.

⁵³ Paul R. Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 338.

⁵⁴ Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics*, 344.

II.5.1. Demand for Punjabi Suba (State)

The fear of losing the importance of Punjabi language in the Punjab of free India prompted the *Akalis* to put pressure (from 1949 onwards) on the Central government for the creation of a separate Punjabi-speaking state in which Punjabi in *Gurmukhi* would be the official language and medium of instruction in the educational institutions. But the Congress party, though it was in favour of restructuring of provinces on the basis of languages before the partition of India, began to seriously re-think the question of reorganization on linguistic basis after the independence.⁵⁵ Hence, the demand of separate state on linguistic basis for the Punjabis, particularly the Sikhs, was unacceptable to Nehru and the Congress party for three reasons: that it was communal plot, because it was voiced by Sikhs; that it would make the Hindu-Sikh relationship more bitter, because the Sikh community would be majority in the proposed state; and that a section of central leaders envisaged a security threat in the Sikh-dominated state bordering Pakistan.⁵⁶ Apparently these arguments underscore the communal bias in Congress party's policy.

II.5.2. Formation of Punjabi Suba

The *Akali's* demand for the creation of a separate Punjabi speaking state could not be realized during the life time of Nehru due to the opposition from the two fronts – Hindus of Punjab and the Congress party. To suppress the agitation for a separate Punjabi speaking state (on the one side) and to pacify the *Akali* leaders (on the other) the Congress Party put forward a series of impracticable compromises. Therefore, the *Akalis* re-launched an agitation for a Punjabi *Suba* from early 1960s, and in the next five years they were emboldened by new

⁵⁵ Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 186.

⁵⁶ S. Harjot Oberoi, "From Punjab to 'Khalistan': Territoriality and Metacommentary," in *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (Spring, 1987), 38.

developments: Nehru and Pratap Singh Kairon, the two chief political opponents to the demand, died in 1964 and in 1965 (Kairon was assassinated) respectively; the *Akali* leadership was taken over by Sant Fateh Singh whose idea “of a Punjabi *Suba* was more inclusive and cultural”; and, Hindu opposition weakened due to growing impetus behind the *Hariyanvi* movement for “the creation of Hindi-speaking state in the south-east.”⁵⁷ Meanwhile, the suspension of a fast-unto-death by Sant Fateh Singh at the outbreak of Indo-Pak war in 1965 demonstrated the Sikhs’ patriotism towards national interest. As a reward for this patriotism, a Parliamentary Committee recommended the formation of a Punjabi *Suba*. Accordingly on 1 November 1966 the Punjab Reorganization Act (1966) came into effect.

According to the Act, Punjab province was bifurcated into the Punjab and Haryana states and some mountainous areas were merged with Himachal Pradesh. At last the “Sikh homeland” with a Sikh majority (60%) became the reality.⁵⁸ However, at the time of demarcation of boundaries some very sensitive matters – such as the non-inclusion of Chandigarh (Chandigarh was made the capital of both Punjab and Haryana) and several Punjabi-speaking areas (which were merged with Haryana) within the Punjab, and water sharing and language disputes – were left unresolved. These issues became the ground of later disputes between Punjab, Haryana and the Centre.

II.6. Socio-Political Issues in Post-1966 Punjab

The *Akali* Dal with its coalition partners formed the first elected government in the newly created state of Punjab in 1967. However, the *Akail Dal* government could not last long due to

⁵⁷ Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 91.

⁵⁸ See S. Bhatnagar and P.S. Verma, “Coalition Governments (1967-80),” in *The Story of Punjab: Yesterday and Today*, edited by Verinder Grover, second edition, Vol. 2 (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications PVT. LTD., 1999), 409; henceforth, Grover (ed.), *The Story of Punjab* 2.

hostile policy of the Congress party, then ruling party in the Centre, towards the non-Congress political parties. In less than nineteen months two *Akali* ministries collapsed and president's rule was imposed – “the United Front ministry fell on 22 November 1967” and Lachman Singh Gill's “ministry fell on 23 August 1968.” The Punjab witnessed three coalition governments from 1967 to 1980: the first one, formed in March 1967, “comprised the the Akali Dal, the jana Sangh, CPI, Republican Party and a few independent members;” the second was coalition of “Akali Dal and Jana Sangh;” and, the third (formed in 1977) was “the coalition between the Akali Dal and Janata Party.”⁵⁹ Therefore, the *Akali* leaders had to review the political condition because of the abuse of power by the Congress government. The agreement signed (in October 1968) by the combined Master Tara Singh and *Sant Akali Dal* elucidate the political objectives of the Sikh *Panth*. According to the agreement, the political goal of the *Panth*

was well grounded in the commandments of Guru Gobind Singh and given concrete shape in the Sikh history. The Khalsa were ‘a sovereign people by birth-right’; all decision-making powers belonged to the Panth; and the goal of the Shiromani Akali Dal was to achieve an autonomous status in a well demarcated territory within free India.⁶⁰

Consequently, the *Akali Dal* demanded that the Constitution of India be formulated on true federal basis, and states be granted greater autonomy. The main objective of the demand for state autonomy was to get Chandigarh and the excluded Punjabi-speaking areas incorporated into Punjab and to gain control of river waters and power projects.

⁵⁹ Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 207. Also, Dev Raj Himtanvi, “Politics of the Rural Development in a Punjab Village,” in Grover (ed.) *The Story of Punjab* 2, 44; Bhatnagar and Verma, “Coalition Governments (1967-80),” in Grover (ed.) *The Story of Punjab* 2, 408.

⁶⁰ Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 207.

The above-mentioned issues clearly reflect the *Akali's* conception that, even after the independence of India the Sikh *Panth* was under bondage. This view was given more emphasis during the period of terrorist movement in Punjab.

II.6.1. Economic Transformation and Its Negative Effect

In spite of political complications, Punjab witnessed rapid economic transformation since mid-1960s due to “the Green Revolution” as a result of the process of modernization. From mid-1960s farmers began to harvest bumper crops of wheat and rice using “high-yielding variety”⁶¹ of seeds, chemical fertilizers and modern agricultural machinery tools. This changed Punjab from “a food-deficit state” into the “granary of India”⁶² and helped to improve the economic state of many ordinary farmers in Punjab. In addition, many people from Punjab immigrated to the Middle East and the Western world in search of job and other opportunities due to the open door for immigration to the outside world. Many of the immigrants brought back home fortunes earned in the foreign countries, and helped their families to improve their economic condition further. The Green Revolution and immigration changed the economic and educational map of Punjab in general and Sikh society in particular.

These essential developments wrought by the process of modernization not only transformed the Sikh society of Punjab economically and educationally but, also had some negative impact. Increasing numbers of Sikhs began to neglect the visible Sikh symbols (the five *Ks*). Seemingly religiously-prohibited habits like smoking, drinking, taking drugs and watching

⁶¹ Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 93.

⁶² See M.S. Randhawa, “Green Revolution in Punjab,” in *Agriculture History*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Oct. 1977), 656; G. S. Bhalla and G.K. Chadha, “Green Revolution and the Small Peasant: A Study of Income Distribution in Punjab Agriculture: I,” in *Economics and Political weekly*, Vol. 17, No. 20 (15 May, 1982), 826f; Richard H. Day and Inderjit Singh, *Economic Development as an Adaptive Process: The Green Revolution in the Indian Punjab* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 1.

and reading pornographic films and literature, smuggled in by the returning immigrants, were part of everyday life for many. Drinking and taking drugs not only impinged on the religious life of the persons concerned but also seemed to have reduced the number of worshippers in the *gurdwaras*. These religious and social evils could have caused deep concern among the religious Sikhs.

II.6.2. The *Akali*'s New Strategy: Anandpur Sahib Resolution

Though Punjab entered into the new era of economic development, the *Akali* leaders were not happy because of their failure to secure the political power in the state. There were two key reasons for their inability to take hold of the political power – factionalism within the *Akali Dal* and the Congress government at the Centre. But, the Congress tended to be greater threat to their political success because of the Congress Party's unfavourable policy towards the *Akali Dal*. Therefore, the *Akali Dal* devised new religio-political strategy at Anandpur Sahib, *Khalsa*'s birthplace, to achieve their political objective. In 1973, at Anandpur Sahib, the Working Committee of the *Akali Dal* passed resolution generally known as Anandpur Sahib Resolution (ASR). The main objective of the ASR is the restriction of the prerogatives of the Central Government to defence, foreign affairs, communications and currency.⁶³ A political settlement worked out on this line would provide suitable religio-political environment for the *Khalsa* to exercise dominant authority in the state.

During the *Akali* agitation (from 1982 to 1984) the ASR occupied very important position in the socio-political "grievances" of the Sikh community. The moderate *Akali* leaders were ready to take into consideration the ASR as the ground for the debate on constitutional reform

⁶³ Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 212.

for closer and better centre-state relationship, but Mrs Gandhi was reluctant to accept it⁶⁴ on the ground that it was religiously inspired. Mrs Gandhi's indifference towards the Sikhs' socio-political grievances and demands, therefore, compelled the *Akalis* to launch a fresh agitation to realize their aspiration, as stated in the ASR.

II.6.3. Launching of the *Dharm Yudh* (Righteous War)

In pursuance of the ASR the *Akalis* planned to begin a new phase of agitation known as *dharm yudh* (righteous/holy war) as advised by the World Sikh Convention (held in July 1981). However, in September 1981, before the agitation was launched, they submitted a list of forty-five grievances to the Prime Minister with the prospect that she would address those concerns and find appropriate settlement. Then, in October they submitted a fresh memorandum, as asked by the Prime Minister, of fifteen demands. Accordingly, three rounds of meetings were held between the Prime Minister and the *Akali* leaders without any concrete outcome. After the last meeting, held on 2 April 1982, the *Akali* leaders returned "with the impression that Mrs. Gandhi had already made up her mind to let the issues wait."⁶⁵

Before resolving any of the Sikhs' grievances Mrs. Gandhi was keen on letting the work on the Satlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal begin due to the imminent election in Haryana. This was the unilateral decision made by Mrs Gandhi in 1981 to please the people of Haryana for her party's political interest. Thus, the *Akalis*, with the support of Communist parties, organized *nahar roko* (block the canal) campaign in 1982. After a second *nahar roko* agitation the *Akali* leaders finally decided to start *dharm yudh*, to pressurise the government to accept their political, religious, economic and cultural demands that are stated in the ASR. The agitation

⁶⁴ Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 96.

⁶⁵ Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 221.

began on 4th August and rapidly gained momentum. Many *Akali* leaders and volunteers courted arrest, making it more difficult for the government to find room for them all in the existing jails in Punjab. On 11 September 1982 a bus carrying arrested volunteers (prisoners) collided with a running train near Tarn Taran and 34 volunteers died on the spot. This incidence further antagonised the Sikhs against the Central government. According to Jeffrey, the agitation “also produced ‘martyrs’ and further ‘evidence’ that Sikhs were ‘second-class citizens’.”⁶⁶

Mrs. Gandhi, instead of addressing the Sikh issues seriously, employed political tactics to buy off time. The *dharm yudh* agitation became a mounting concern to her government due to its growing popularity among the Sikhs. To stop the agitation, before it took the form of wildfire, she employed the usual Congress tactics of negotiation without true commitment. She appointed Swaran Singh, a Cabinet Minister, to negotiate a settlement with the *Akali* on her behalf. Swaran Singh worked out a mutually agreeable formula with the *Akali* leaders on the issues, like Centre-State relations, Chandigarh, river water and the relay of *kirtan* (singing of hymns from the scripture) from the All India Radio.⁶⁷ A cabinet sub-committee, which was appointed by Mrs. Gandhi to consider the formula, accepted it and Swaran Singh communicated that to the *Akali* leaders. However, at the last moment Mrs. Gandhi seems to have turned down the formula worked out by Swaran Singh.⁶⁸ This approach of Mrs. Gandhi could have sent out a message to the Sikh community that the Congress government was non-committed and unconcerned towards the settlement of Sikh people’s socio-political problems.

⁶⁶ Robin Jeffrey, *What is Happening to India?* (Houndmills: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1986), 164.

⁶⁷ Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 222.

⁶⁸ Mark Tully & Satish Jacob, *Amritsar: Mrs. Gandhi’s Last Battle* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1985), 83.

II.7. The Rise of Sikh Religious Terrorism in Punjab

The above reviews assess how religio-historical experiences and symbols and socio-political developments facilitate an environment for rise and sustenance of Sikh religious terrorism in Punjab in early 1980s. Besides, the preceding observations make it explicit that, in the Sikh ethnicity the *miri* (spiritual) and *piri* (temporal) are so finely intertwined that it is not possible to separate them from one another. Such an intricate Sikh socio-religious pattern has been shaped by the process of religious and political transformation and the accumulation of both bitter and cherished experiences undergone by the Sikh community down through the course of their history.

The following section will be devoted to the study of Sikh terrorist movements. The period of Sikh terrorism will be divided into two – pre-Blue-star and post-Blue-star – phases. In the pre-Blue-star stage the main focus will be the rise of Bhindranwale as a prominent religious authority, his theological ideology and his terrorist movement; and, in the post-Blue-star phase the focus will be on the terrorist activities of *Babbar Khalsa* and its ideology. However, it is important to analyse the Sikh resurgence in brief, to examine how Sikh revivalism was associated with the rise of Sikh terrorism, before we take up the study of Sikh terrorism.

II.7.1. Sikh Resurgence

The Sikh Community did not remain unaffected by the worldwide religious resurgence. The modern communication technologies – like radio, television, telephone and news papers – could have made the people of Punjab aware of religio-political developments that were taking place in other parts of the world. At the same time easy and faster means of travel facilities might have provided opportunity for religious Sikhs to interact with the people of other faiths in other parts of the world. According to Jeffrey, two major influences were at

work for growing Sikh revivalism. “First, knowledge of international affairs, resulting from the innovations of the ‘green revolution’”, and second, people “being drawn into a more complex world” that “holds out the possibility of prosperity” often making “it difficult to observe time-honoured religious practices.” In such situation *sant* rose as “a cultural brokers between traditional answers and contemporary problems.”⁶⁹

From 1967 there began a movement for the re-assertion of Sikh religious identity – the Sikh community celebrated the tercentenary of Guru Gobind Singh in 1967 and quinentenary of Guru Nanak in 1969. During the mid-1970s Giani Zail Singh, a Congress Chief Minister of Punjab, gave a momentum to this movement by organizing the centenary celebration of the founding of the *Singh Sabha* (1873); celebrating the birth anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh; and organizing *Kirtan darbars* (elaborate religious performance) all over the state; and public functions were initiated with *ardas* (invocations) and Sikh rituals.⁷⁰ According Tully and Jacob, Zail Singh “went so far that more than one senior member of his own party complained to Mrs. Gandhi that the Punjab government was communal.”⁷¹

Nevertheless, it was Bhindranwale (born in 1947 in a poor *Brar Jat* peasant family in the village of Rode in Faridkote district, in Punjab – because of poor background he had very little formal education),⁷² an obscure preacher who rose into prominence due to his religious zeal to revive Sikhism and to re-establish its pristine glory, who gave impetus to the Sikh religious resurgence from late 1970s. This religious zeal, which was cultivated from his

⁶⁹ Jeffrey, *What's Happening to India?*, 130-31.

⁷⁰ Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 213.

⁷¹ Tully & Jacob, *Amritsar*, 45.

⁷² Sandhu (trans.), *Struggle for Justice*, i.

young days in *Damdami Taksal* (for further clarification see Appendix 3),⁷³ an influential theological institution for preserving Sikh orthodoxy, earned him popularity among the rural Sikhs of Punjab. His initial mission, as a religious preacher, was to bring all Sikhs within the *Khalsa Panth* initiated by the tenth guru and to exhort them to renounce the evils of modernity.⁷⁴

To carry out his mission he would travel to villages and exhort people to stop smoking, drinking, taking drugs and disrespecting the visible symbols of the Sikh faith by not wearing them. He was able to establish a close relationship with the rural Sikhs of Punjab because he spoke the language they understood. In his preaching tours thousands of young Sikhs promised publicly to abstain from the above-mentioned ‘evil lifestyle’ and were baptised; and, they began to attend *gurdwaras* regularly and work more hours in the field. Because of the changes brought in the lives of thousands of people through his preaching mission, he was revered by the people as Baba Sant Jarnail Singhji Bhindranwale. He, unlike other religious preachers, tried to make no distinction between high and low castes.⁷⁵ This *modus operandi*, which aimed to re-establish equality and Sikh brotherhood, earned him more praise and popularity among the rural Sikhs. So, in the eyes of his supporters he was not just a religious preacher/*sant* (saint), but a modern messiah (liberator).⁷⁶

⁷³ See G.S. Dhillon, *India Commits Suicide*, 2nd edition (Chandigarh: Singh & Singh Publications, 1993), 138.

⁷⁴ See Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* II, 329.

⁷⁵ The ideas up to this point in this paragraph are based on, Dhillon, *India Commits Suicide*, 138f; Sandhu (trans.), *Struggle and Justice*, i-viii.

⁷⁶ Jeffrey, *What’s happening to India?*, 164.

II.7.1.1. Change of Course of the Sikh Resurgence

With the rise of his popularity Bhindranwale endowed upon himself the role of temporal authority in addition to his religious (preaching) mission. He organized and trained (in modern arms) a band of followers who would see that his verdict is carried out by all means. Thus, Bhindranwale vested *miri* and *piri* authorities upon himself, emulating the sixth and the tenth gurus. To demonstrate his *miri* and *piri* authorities in most visible manner he, besides wearing five symbols of *Khalsa* Sikhs, wore a bandolier across his chest “charged with bullets, with pistols in holsters on either side of his hips.”⁷⁷ He also made a habit of keeping a steel arrow with him – which would signify that his authority comes from none other than the sixth and tenth gurus themselves.

Moreover, this kind of arms display suggests his *Jat* attitude of courage and confrontation⁷⁸ because, he was a *Jat*. Almost 70% of the total Sikh population today is *Jat*, and remaining of the Sikh population consist of other three caste groups⁷⁹ (*Mazhabis* or ex-untouchables, *Ramgharhias* or artisans, *Khattris*, *Aroras* and other⁸⁰) roughly in equal ratio. Since the 18th century the Sikh religion has been blended together with the *Jat* culture; therefore, for two centuries *Jat* Sikhs have supplied a pattern to be emulated by other Sikhs.⁸¹ This pattern includes the *Jat* attitude of courage and confrontation. According to Karandeep Singh, the

⁷⁷ Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* II, 330.

⁷⁸ “As a *Jat* Sikh from southern Punjab, Bhindranwale was also familiar with violence.” Jeffrey, *What’s happening to India?*, 135.

⁷⁹ Gurharpal Singh, “Sikhism and Just War Theory”, Draft – Published in *Just War Theory in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Paul Robinson (Ashgate: 2003), 9; according to Jeffrey, *Jats* “make up between 50 to 60 per cent of all Sikhs”. See Jeffrey, *What’s Happening to India?*, 48.

⁸⁰ Jeffrey, *What’s Happening to India?*, 48.

⁸¹ Jeffrey, *What’s Happening to India?*, 48-9.

inflow of the *Jat* social outlook gave an extent of “militancy to the Sikh religion and the latter, in turn, strengthened this militancy by evoking the concept of martyrdom.”⁸²

Hence, from the time Bhindranwale vested in himself the twofold authorities the Sikh religious awakening rekindled Sikh ethno-religious nationalism. In this Sikh ethno-religious nationalistic stirring three sets of symbols played a dynamic role: “historical symbols derived from the history of the Sikh kingdoms” before annexation; “religious symbols which have been used”⁸³ to demarcate the boundary line between (*Khalsa*) Sikhs and non-Sikhs, particularly Hindus, in the modern Punjab; and cultural symbols, particularly of the *Khalsa Panth*. So, this ethno-religious nationalism further reinforced already existing demarcation line between “us”(Sikhs) and “them” (non-Sikhs). The boundary line not only separated Sikhs and people of other religious faiths, specifically Hindus, but also differentiated *Khalsa* Sikhs and other Sikhs – e.g., *Sahajdharis*, sectarian Sikhs and liberal Sikhs. Among these other Sikhs the *Nirankaris* had been the most hated enemies of the *Khalsa Panth*, since the latter half of the nineteenth century because of their heterodox religious belief and practices. The *Nirankaris* “differ from the orthodox Sikhs in their disapproval of the militant brotherhood, the Khalsa, and in the homage they accord Dayal Das and his successors, to whom they accord the status of living Guru.”⁸⁴

⁸² Karandeep Singh, “The Politics of Religious Resurgence and Religious Terrorism: The Case of the Sikhs of India,” in *Religious Resurgence and Politics in the Contemporary World*, edited by Emile Sahliyeh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 248.

⁸³ Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics*, 278.

⁸⁴ “Nirankari,” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica 2008 Ultimate Reference Suite* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2008).

II.7.1.2. Bhindranwale's Authority

Bhindranwale firmly established his authority as a religious saint among his Sikh followers, and this authority was to play a vital role in making people honour his ideology as “words from above.” Dhillon says that Bhindranwale was intensely loved and intensely hated man of the time; thus, he “was looked upon as a villain and a hero.”⁸⁵ According to Jeffrey, “Punjab, never more prosperous, literate or widely read, looked constantly to a man who went to school for only five years.”⁸⁶ Though he was a rustic preacher and his speeches were full of repetitions and do’s and don’ts, it was this authority which attracted many young Sikhs towards him, and they were ready to lay down their lives without any slightest hesitation to fulfil his religious ideology. The relationship was like spiritual romance between Bhindranwale (who represented the guru) and his followers (disciples).

So, during his lifetime Bhindranwale could stand as a strong symbol of unity among his followers, though there were other groups like *Babbar Khalsa* and *Akhand Kirtani Jatha*,⁸⁷ who were against Bhindranwale. Some of the *Akali* leaders, like Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, and many educated Sikhs were against his militant ideology. However, “the beginning of a powerful new movement” in August 1982 “signalled the fact that Bhindranwale was winning the war of symbols.”⁸⁸ The *Akali* leaders merged their *dharm*

⁸⁵ Dhillon, *India Commits Suicide*, 138.

⁸⁶ Jeffrey, *What's Happening to India?*, 147.

⁸⁷ Bhindranwale, *Babbar Khalsa* and the *Akhand Kirtani Jatha* were “fiercely antagonistic towards each other but fired with the same ideology....” Jeffrey, *What's Happening to India?*, 339.

⁸⁸ Jeffrey, *What's happening to India?*, 163.

yudh morcha with Bhindranwale's with the aim of taking over his movement; instead, he "took over theirs."⁸⁹

II.7.1.3. Bhindranwale's Entry into the National Limelight

The confrontation with the *Nirankaris* in 1978 and political wrangling between the Congress and the *Akali Dal* pushed Bhindranwale to the forefront of the Sikh religio-political movement. On 13 April 1978 Bhindranwale's supporters were killed by *Nirankaris* at the *Nirankari* Convention, in Amritsar. *Nirankari* sect was granted permission by the then *Akali Dal* government to hold the convention in Amritsar. But, Bhindranwale and his followers did not want the convention to be held in Amritsar, that also during the Sikh holy day (*Baisakhi*). Bhindranwale with his followers marched to the convention to stop it. At the convention battle broke out between the *Nirankaris* and the followers of Bhindranwale. Twelve Sikhs and three *Nirankaris* were killed in the battle.⁹⁰ After this incident, a new political development took place, due to which Bhindranwale, for the first time, came to the limelight in the state and national stage.

Meanwhile, the post-Emergency election (1977) was disastrous for Mrs. Gandhi and the Congress party. Mrs Gandhi and her Congress party were heavily defeated in the Centre and in several states. In Punjab a coalition government was formed by the *Akali Dal* "with the New *Janta* Party, which found itself in power in Delhi."⁹¹ Knowing the fragility of the alliance, Sanjay Gandhi (Mrs Gandhi's younger son) set out to break the coalition. To accomplish the break-up of the alliance in Punjab, Zail Singh seems to have suggested Sanjay

⁸⁹ Jeffrey, *What's happening to India?*, 163.

⁹⁰ Tully & Jacob, *Amritsar*, 59.

⁹¹ Tully & Jacob, *Amritsar*, 56.

should seek to create division within the *Akali Dal*. Hence, Sanjay, most probably on the recommendation of Zail Singh, was looking for a competent religious figure to carry out his intended mission. At that juncture Bhindranwale was found as a capable *Sant* who could “discredit the traditional *Akali Dal* leadership.”⁹² The Congress leaders’ strategy was to use Bhindranwale as a pawn to do their bidding to achieve their political goal in Punjab. But, it took the Congress leaders quite some time to realize that Bhindranwale would give them more trouble than the *Akalis*. Mrs Gandhi and her Congress Party won the *Lok Sabha* election, held in January 1980, and came back to power, and in February 1980 the *Akali Dal* ministry was dismissed “on the ground that they had lost their mandates in the light of the *Lok Sabha* Elections.”⁹³ However, within first year of Mrs. Gandhi’s return to power (1980-81) three high profile murders brought to light the tension in the Congress party and placed Bhindranwale in the vanguard of the Punjab’s religio-political arena. Finally, Bhindranwale fell out with the Congress leaders in 1981; but, immediately the *Akali Dal* came forward in support of Bhindranwale to make him their *danda* (staff) to beat the Congress government for their political end. The calculation of the *Akalis*, too, proved wrong within a short time. Though both the *Akalis* and Bhindranwale operated in the same cosmos, the first was interested in recapturing political power and the later in reviving his religious community.

II.7.1.4. Bhindranwale’s Theology

According Bhindranwale, a true Sikh is someone who is formally initiated into the *Khalsa Panth*, who wears the five Ks and who refrains from all kinds of addictions. For him a true Sikh should not just be a religious pacifist, but he must be ready to fight in a righteous battle

⁹²Tully & Jacob, *Amritsar*, 57.

⁹³ Pradeep Kumar and Nisha Garg, “Assembly Elections 1980: A Case Study of Candidates in a Punjab Constituency,” in Grover (ed.), *The Story of Punjab* 2, 419.

for the sake of justice, Sikh faith and Sikh nation. When Bhindranwale “exhorted his followers to action, he called for ‘a struggle ... for our faith, for the Sikh nation, for the oppressed.’”⁹⁴ Bhindranwale’s exhortation suggests that the conflict between evil (the political power which oppresses the Sikhs) and truth (the Sikh faith) has already begun; therefore, all true Sikhs are obliged to participate actively in the battle. Moreover, the conflict is “a conflict between faith and the lack of faith” at a personal level, and “a battle between truth and evil” on the cosmic level.⁹⁵ In this cosmic battle, according to Bhindranwale, enemies arise “from all sides and in all forms” and they use various strategies to destroy the Sikh religion.⁹⁶ Since the enemy’s target is to destroy the Sikh religion, all true Sikhs have to fight the battle against these conceived evil forces both for the Immortal Guru and for their ethno-religious nationalistic identity – not only Bhindranwale, but other radical Sikh leaders too were seriously concerned of losing true Sikh identity. Therefore, by evoking “the image of great war between good and evil waged in the present day,” Bhindranwale strongly supported the notion of *miri* and *piri* powers,⁹⁷ to fight the battle against the evil force. In the cosmic battle evil ultimately will be destroyed by the grace and power of the Immortal Guru. Further, he constantly reminded his followers that the true Sikhs belong to Guru Hargobind, “the Master of *Miri* and *Piri*”, “‘destroyer of armies, the valiant Guru, the great warrior, the great benefactor’”, and Guru Gobind, the originator of *Khalsa Panth* and “the Tenth King”.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God* (London: University of California Press, 2003), 151.

⁹⁵ Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?*, 158.

⁹⁶ Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?*, 158.

⁹⁷ Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?*, 94.

⁹⁸ Sandhu (trans.), *Struggle for Justice*, 336.

From the time Bhindranwale fell out with the Congress leaders he began to preach anti-Congress and anti-Hindu rhetoric. His speeches clearly indicate that the Congress party and Hindus are not different from each other; they are two different manifestations of same enemy of the Sikhs. He called Hindus “*dhotian wale* (dhoti wearers), *topian wale* (cap wearers)” and “Mrs Gandhi *Bahmani* (Brahmin woman) and *Panditan di dhee* (daughter of pundits).”⁹⁹ Moreover, this demeaning expression of Bhindranwale refutes the Hindus’ claim that Sikhism is not different from Hinduism because (from Hindus’ point of view) Sikhism is a branch of Hinduism. Further, the speech asserts the distinctiveness of religious and cultural identity of the Sikhs.

The Congress party, according to him, represented the majority Hindu community and worked for the benefit of the Hindus. He further argued that the Sikhs were discriminated against and victimised from the time of Indian independence by the Congress party and the Hindus. To corroborate his argument he cited the following illustrations: the Indian Constitution did not recognize the Sikh community as a distinct religious community; the Sikhs’ demands, listed in the ASR, were not accepted; commitment of atrocities by police personnel against Sikh men and women (the death of 34 volunteers near Tarn Taran was repeatedly mentioned on this account); the dismissal of the *Akali* ministry in 1980; the humiliation of Sikhs in Haryana during Asian Games in Delhi in 1982 and; the Sikhs were called extremists by Mrs. Gandhi and militant Hindus because they carry arms (one of the five Ks) in obedience to the command of their tenth guru.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, according to him, Hindu demands were treated differently from the Sikh demands, different laws were applied for Hindus and Sikhs, Sikhs were punished without evidence but Hindu wrongdoers did not get

⁹⁹ Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* II, 330.

¹⁰⁰ See Sandhu (trans.), *Struggle for Justice*, xxviii.

punishment, “Hindu leaders issue threats against Sikhs and the Sikh response is punished,” Hindu journalists slandered Sikh faith and went unpunished, defilement of the Sikh places of worship was ignored, Sikhs in the Indian army were ill-treated, and “weapons licenses issued to Sikhs are being revoked but Hindus can keep illicit weapons”.¹⁰¹

The above-stated discriminatory activities of the Congress government, in the view of Bhindranwale, were clear signs of slavery. For this reason he urged the true (*Khalsa*) Sikhs to throw off the slavery from their necks. They had to achieve the ASR to get rid of this slavery. Therefore, he advised his followers to arm themselves with modern weapons and ride bikes instead of horses, rode by their ancestors, to fight against the enemies. Further, he exhorted them to disregard any government rule that would stop them from carrying arms. They were told that the ASR was their license to carry modern arms and to kill enemies of the Sikh community and the Sikh faith.¹⁰²

Meanwhile, in response to a question about his views concerning the demand for *Khalistan*, Bhindranwale’s response was, “I have never opposed a sovereign *Khalistan*, nor have I supported it”.¹⁰³ According to him, it was for Mrs Gandhi to decide whether to keep the Sikhs in India (Hindustan) or to give them *Khalistan*. If she wanted the Sikhs to remain within Hindustan then she had to give them equal rights, which meant she should accept the ASR. However, nothing less than ASR would be acceptable to him and his followers. Since ASR was the religio-political right and goal of the Sikhs, they should achieve it at any cost.

¹⁰¹ Sandhu (trans.), *Struggle for Justice*, 325-336.

¹⁰² Sandhu (trans.), *Struggle for Justice*, 312-313.

¹⁰³ Prithvis Chakravarti, “Sikhs are Split on Morcha Aims,” in Grover (ed.) *The Story of Punjab* 2, 438.

Thus, violence to achieve the religio-political goal of the Sikhs was justified. However, Bhindranwale denied that he ever initiated violence, and a true Sikh, according to him, is “not supposed to indulge in violence but it is a different matter if one acted in self-defence”.¹⁰⁴ The preceding argument of Bhindranwale makes it obvious that he believed Sikhs were enslaved, discriminated against and victimised by the existing socio-political system; therefore, they had the right to defend themselves to safeguard their religious, cultural and political identity. An act of self-defence, he endorsed, should not be called violence.

II.8. Terrorist Violence during pre-Blue-Star Phase

During 1980-81 three high profile murders took place – *Nirankari* guru, Baba Gurbachan Singh, and his bodyguards were murdered in Delhi on 24 April 1980; in September 1981 eighty-two year old Lala Jagat Narain, proprietor of the *Hind Samachar* group of papers, was murdered; on 22 December 1981 *Jathedar* Santokh Singh of Delhi was killed. Then, Bhindranwale was arrested on 20 September 1981 in connection with the murders of *Nirankari* guru and Lala Jagat Narain. In retaliation the followers of Bhindranwale killed four people and wounded eleven with sten-guns on 22 September, in Jullundhar; on 29 September an Indian airline plane en route to Lahore was hijacked; two people were killed in the Chandigarh Secretariat and a murder attempt was made on a leading *Nirankari* official on 16 October; a *Nirankari*, a Hindu politician and two policemen were killed in November. From this time Bhindranwale shifted his headquarters to the *Akal Takht* and his armed followers performed their terrorist activities from the temple complex. Besides, modern arms and ammunitions were smuggled inside the temple complex, and at the same time Bhindranwale,

¹⁰⁴Chakravarti, “Sikhs are Split on Morcha Aims,” 440.

with greater force, began to make regular hateful speeches against the “‘Hindu government’ and the ‘Delhi *Darbar*.’”¹⁰⁵

On 14th February 1983, Sikhs were burned and publicly humiliated and their gurdwaras were desecrated in Haryana.¹⁰⁶ This incidence led to communal violence between Hindus and Sikhs in Punjab and Haryana. Apparently the incidence of violence against the Sikhs further emboldened Bhindranwale because, his assumption that the Sikh identity would be lost in the sea of resurgent Hinduism proved right. His anti-Hindu speeches became louder and clearer. The tape recordings of his hate-speeches were distributed in the Sikh villages. Furthermore, he made it clear that he opposed Hindu-Sikh brotherhood and friendship because of the violent incidents against the Sikhs. As per his calculation only 35 Hindus fell in the share of each Sikh. Thus, to strengthen the militant Spirit of his followers he said:

Our guru,’ said one Sikh, ‘could fight, 125,000 (sawa lakh sey ek ladaoon). We have calculated that with a total Hindu population of 66 crores [660 millions], it comes to only 35 per Sikh. Imagine only 35, not even a hundred. So don’t think of yourselves as weak.¹⁰⁷

These anti-Hindu speeches of Bhindranwale further escalated the terrorist violence. The violent incidents included bank robbery, stealing weapons, cutting telephone wires, burning railway stations, attacks on police personals, bombings, killing *Nirankaris*, killing civilians and attacks on ministers and high profile officials.¹⁰⁸ Some of the prominent incidents were: killing of Deputy Inspector General, A. S. Atwal, at the Golden Temple complex on 25 April 1983; the cold blooded murder of Hindu bus passengers in October 1983; and the killing of

¹⁰⁵ Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* II, 357-8.

¹⁰⁶ Tavleen Singh, “Terrorist in the Temple” in *Punjab Story*, edited Amarjit Kaur et al, third impression (New Delhi: Roli Books Pvt. Ltd., 2005), 61.

¹⁰⁷ Singh, “Terrorist in the Temple”, 61.

¹⁰⁸ Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* II, 357-8.

thirty-five Hindus in retaliation to eight Sikhs killed in Haryana on 19 February 1983, due to mob violence against the Sikhs.

Consequently, on 6 June 1984 a military operation, code named Blue-star, was launched against the Sikh militants. In the operation Bhindranwale along with his right hand men, Major-General Shahbeg Singh and Amrik Singh, and many of his followers were killed, some militants surrendered and many of them escaped. According to Tully & Jacob “200 followers of Bhindranwale escaped on 3rd June when curfew was lifted,” and “about 250 people surrendered in the Temple complex and 500 in the hostel complex after the two battles were over.”¹⁰⁹ Among the surrendered, no doubt, many were either pilgrims or temple officials and attendants. The Army Operation, says Gurpreet Singh, “left some 1,000 terrorists and 200 soldiers dead.”¹¹⁰ Total number of military and civilian casualties, “according to one estimate,” were seven hundred officers and men and five thousand civilians, mostly pilgrims “including women and children.”¹¹¹

Although the operation was successful in flushing out the militants from the temple complex, it was a serious political miscalculation. Blue-star rocked India due to two incidents that followed – mutinies in several places by young Sikh soldiers,¹¹² the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi by her Sikh security guards and the anti-Sikh pogrom in Delhi and other parts of India. The Blue-star Operation horrified and wounded the religious sentiment of the Sikhs in general; therefore, the Sikhs “were strikingly unanimous in their condemnation of Operation

¹⁰⁹ Tully & Jacob, *Amritsar*, 184-5.

¹¹⁰ Gurpreet Singh, *Terrorism: Punjab's Recurring Nightmare*, edited by Gaurav Jaswal (New Delhi: Sehgal Book Distributors, 1996), 2.

¹¹¹ Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 227; Tully & Jacob, *Amritsar*, 183.

¹¹² Gurpreet Singh reports, “More than 2,000 Sikh troops revolted in different parts of the country.” Gurpreet Singh, *Terrorism: Punjab's Recurring Nightmare*, 2..

Blue-star as an unnecessary overkill.”¹¹³ After the Blue-star, Sikh terrorism, instead of being subdued, spread all over Punjab and its neighbouring states and became a serious concern to the Indian government.

II.9. Post-Blue-Star Terrorism

The military attack on the Golden Temple complex could neither eliminate the terrorists nor break their spirit in carrying on their intended mission. Instead, they could garner more incentive and public support due to what happened in the aftermath of the Blue-star and Mrs. Gandhi's death. The military attack on the holiest place of the Sikhs and destruction of Sikh lives¹¹⁴ and property by the murderous crowds organized by political (Congress) leaders, rather proved the argument of Bhindranwale that the enemies of the Sikhs are after the destruction of Sikh religion and culture. The target of the military attack on the “spiritual and political centre of the Sikhs”, in the view of Pettigrew, was “not to eliminate a political figure or a political movement but to suppress the culture of a people, to attack their heart, to strike a blow at their spirit and self-confidence.”¹¹⁵ The military attack on the Sikhs' religio-political institutions, in addition to the handling of long-standing Sikh issues without serious commitment by the Central government, fuelled Sikh antagonism all over the world against the Indian government. According to Baweja, “on the day that the Temple complex was handed back to the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee by the army authorities [...] men cried unabashedly while the women wailed and beat their chests on seeing the bullet

¹¹³ Dipankar Gupta, *The Context of Ethnicity: Sikh Identity in a Comparative Perspective* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 77.

¹¹⁴ According to Pettigrew, more than four thousand Sikhs were murdered in the cities of Northern India – specifically in Delhi. Pettigrew, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 8.

¹¹⁵ Pettigrew, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 8.

mark [...] That day, women swore revenge and offered their sons for the ‘Sikh cause’.”¹¹⁶ Apparently the military action against the Sikh holy place further motivated Sikh terrorist elements to increase their terrorist activities.

During the second phase of the terrorist movement the Sikh Diaspora of North America, Great Britain and Europe played an active part by organizing, supporting and providing both material and diplomatic and moral assistance towards the sustenance of Sikh resistance in Punjab.¹¹⁷ According to the Government of India (GOI) White Paper on the Punjab Agitation, a number of secessionist Sikh organizations were operating abroad, and among them “the National Council of Khalistan, Dal Khalsa, Babbar Khalsa and Akhand Kirtan [sic] Jatha” were the chief ones.¹¹⁸ Moreover, the active involvement of the Sikh Diaspora added more dynamism and passion to the Sikh terrorist movement in Punjab during the second phase.

The terrorists who escaped from the Temple complex during the operation Blue-star regrouped afterward and carried on terrorist activities all over Punjab and its neighbouring states with greater intensity. The military operation, code named Woodrose, which aimed to clear “the countryside militants and weapons, instead pushed youths across the border into Pakistani training camps.”¹¹⁹ However, the post-Blue-star terrorist groups lacked a strong leader, like Bhindranwale, to reign over them. Before the Blue-star there were three main terrorist groups – *Dal Khalsa*, *Dashmesh Regiment* and *Babbar Khalsa*, and all of them

¹¹⁶ Harinder Baweja, “Living by the Gun”, in Grover (ed.), *The Story of Punjab* 2, 571.

¹¹⁷ See Gurharpal Singh, “Sikhism and Just War Theory” in *Just War Theory in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Paul Robinson (Ashgate: 2003).

¹¹⁸ “Text of the White Paper on the Punjab Agitation Issued on 10 July 1984,” in *The Story of Punjab: Yesterday and Today (Documents, Treaties and Exhaustive Bibliography)*, edited by Verinder Grover, Vol. III, Second edition (New Delhi: Deept & Deep Publications PVT. LTD., 1999), 342. Henceforth, Grover (ed.), *The Story of Punjab* III.

¹¹⁹ Grover (ed.), *The Story of Punjab* 2, 571.

operated from their base inside the Golden Temple. But, after the Operation several terrorist groups – *Khalistan Zindabad Force* (KZF), International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF), All-India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF), Bhindranwale Tiger Force of *Khalistan* (BTFK), *Khalistan* Liberation Army (KLA), *Khalistan* Commando Force (KCF), *Khalsitan* Liberation Force (KLF), *Khalistan* Armed Force (KAF), *Khalistan* Liberation Organization (KLO), *Khalistan* National Army (KNA), *Khalistan* Guerrilla Force (KGF), and *Khalistan* Security Force (KSF) – came into existence, and terrorist violence increased in number and magnitude. The activities of these groups were controlled by three main *Panthic* Committees during 1986 to 1993. However, both the *Panthic* Committees and the terrorist groups were heavily troubled with factionalism for which there was regular “internecine warfare among them,” and such warfare was “frequently promoted by counterinsurgency operations undertaken by the security services.”¹²⁰

II.9.1. Babbar Khalsa

The *Babbar Khalsa* came into existence in 1978, after a clash between the *Nirankaris* and Sikh volunteers in Amritsar. Sukhdev Singh Babbar was the founder and leader of the group. The group took the name of the *Babbar Akalis*, those who opposed “the Akali Dal’s non-violent policy during the Gurudwara Reform Movement in the 1920s” and were involved in violent activities.¹²¹ According to the GOI White Paper, *Babbar Khalsa* was “a political offshoot of Akhand Kirtani Jatha”.¹²² In 1981, Talwinder Singh Parmar, one of the founding members of the group, established an overseas unit of *Babbar Khalsa* (which is generally known as *Babbar Khalsa* International) in Canada. The main objective of the *Babbar Khalsa*

¹²⁰ Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 152.

¹²¹ Tully & Jacob, *Amritsar*, 111.

¹²² Grover (ed.), *The Story of Punjab* 3, 346.

was to take revenge for the humiliation of the Sikh “volunteers suffered at the hands of the Nirankaris.”¹²³ Therefore, the *Nirankaris* were the avowed enemies of the group. However, before the Blue-star the group opposed Bhindranwale, too, for his alleged desertion of the Sikh volunteers who were left to march to the *Nirankari* assembly at the risk of their lives. In this incident Fauja Singh, founder of *Akhand Kirtani Jatha* and husband of Bibi Amarjit Kaur, was among twelve Sikhs killed by the Nirankaris – Amarjit Kaur never had forgiven Bhindranwale “for not having led the anti-Nirankari demonstration in which her husband was killed.”¹²⁴ Except this accusation and the claim that it was not so much anti-Hindu,¹²⁵ the group seemed to have no ideological differences with Bhindranwale. The group’s objective, according to the GOI White Paper, was to achieve an independent territory for the Sikhs, because it held the view that unless the Sikhs got independent territory they would not be able to maintain their religious purity.¹²⁶

In the pre-Blue-star days the *Babbars* stood as formidable opponent to Bhindranwale inside the Temple complex. This group provided armed assistance to Longowal, who felt insecure because of the rising difference between the *Akali Dal* and Bhindranwale, and it drove out Bhindranwale and his armed followers from *Guru Nanak Niwas* on 15 December 1983. After this incidence Sukhdev, leader of the *Babbar Khalsa*, began to boldly talk to journalist “about how it was really the *Babbars* who had killed most of the Nirankaris so far and how they would continue to kill them”.¹²⁷ According to Tavleen, “the extraordinary thing about the

¹²³ Chakrvarti, “Sikhs are Split on Morcha Aims,” 433.

¹²⁴ Singh, “Terrorists in the Temple,” 60.

¹²⁵ Singh, “Terrorists in the Temple,” 60.

¹²⁶ Grover (ed.), *The Story of Punjab* 3, 346

¹²⁷ Singh, “Terrorists in the Temple,” 59.

Babbars ... was that they could come and go from the Golden Temple as they pleased because the police [sic] had no idea who they were.”¹²⁸ Moreover, this group took an oath, along with other groups, to defend the temple till death.¹²⁹ However, when the military moved in most of the members of the group (including the leader) escaped by breaking through a wall behind the Guru Nanak *Niwas*.

In the post-Blue-star days *Babbar* became the most feared terrorist group because of being “connected with number of killings”.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, the authority of the *Babbar* was challenged by the *Khalistan* Commando Force (KCF) and the *Khalistan* Liberation Force (KLF). Therefore, *Babbar* with other splinter groups formed an alliance known as *Car Jhujharu Jathebande* (the four groups of freedom fighters). According to Pettigrew, from 1988 to 1991 *Car Jhujharu Jathebande* (CJJ) “held sway and carried out a programme which suited Delhi’s interest,” intentionally or unintentionally.¹³¹ This group was against the political dialogue and debate, and it threatened anyone who would come to the political prominence. The group intended to achieve its ideological goal through armed struggle, not through dialogue. Therefore, it eliminated many intelligent, truthful and popular political figures.¹³² This derailed any political process for solving the Punjab problem on the one hand and created chaotic conditions in the state giving opportunity to the Central government for militarization on the other. This group also targeted members of other terrorist groups, particularly KCF and KLF, to reinforce its authority over other Sikh terrorist factions. Such

¹²⁸ Singh, “Terrorists in the Temple,” 59

¹²⁹ Shekhar Gupta, “Blood, Sweat and Tears,” in *The Punjab Story* 2, 95.

¹³⁰ Prem Singh, “Punjab: The Widening Secessionist Front,” in Grover (ed.), *The Story of Punjab* 2, 516.

¹³¹ Pettigrew, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 49.

¹³² Pettigrew, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 49.

killings led to internecine warfare among the different factions. Besides, the group was also involved in random killing, kidnapping for extortion, and other violent incidents.

II.9.2. Transformation of Terrorism in the Post-Blue-Star Phase

During the Post-Blue-Star phase Sikh terrorism had undergone a radical transformation. The following points highlight the transformation: with the death of Bhindranwale and his right hand men the terrorist groups lacked central leadership to guide and to control the groups, and to infuse a given ideological incentive among them; the centre of gravity of terrorist movement shifted from Amritsar to the whole of Punjab and its neighbouring states; the terrorists overtly raised the demand of *Khalistan* in 1986;¹³³ “ideology soon began to fade as the terrorists recognised the gun to be a powerful tool in their pursuit for power;”¹³⁴ different groups adopted their own strategy and means for their violent activities; terrorist groups mushroomed; one group aimed to overshadow other groups and there began internecine warfare; in many cases idle, unemployed, carefree and socially and politically victimised young people joined terrorist camps for their personal motives and gains; foreign powers, to manipulate the situation for their own purpose, sheltered, trained and supplied modern arms to the terrorists; and, more Sikhs were being killed than Hindus.

The second phase of Sikh terrorism gained more notoriety than the first phase; during this period the people of Punjab began to get fed up of terrorism¹³⁵ because of indiscriminate killing, torture, kidnapping and extortion. Punjab, as described in a survey in July 1992, was “an area of darkness” where people were living in continuous fear of violence, and where the

¹³³ Prem Singh, “Punjab: the Widening Secessionist Front,” 515-16.

¹³⁴ Baweja, “Living by the Gun,” 571.

¹³⁵ Baweja, “Living by the Gun,” 573.

state government found its 'boundaries rolled back and its political will undermined into non-existence'.”¹³⁶

Consequently, the Central government mobilised more than 250,000 paramilitary and army personnel and used various anti-terrorist tactics to defeat the terrorism in Punjab. Sikh terrorism was finally crushed in 1993 at huge cost in terms of human lives and monetary expense. From 1984 to 1993 there occurred almost thirty thousand fatalities in Punjab due to terrorist violence, military operation and counterinsurgency measures and mechanisms of the Central government.¹³⁷

II.10. Sikh Religious Terrorism: An Assessment

Inner conviction and passion were the essential dynamics in the act of Sikh religious terrorism. The spiritual inspiration or the inner conviction was supplied by the radical Sikh religious ideologies based on the Sikh religious symbols, historical experiences and socio-political context. One of the most prominent religious ideologies was the cosmic battle between the evil and good – Sikh faith represented good and Hindus and the Indian state symbolized evil. The Sikhs had to fight a battle to safeguard their ethno-religious identity as per the command of Guru Hargobind, the innovator of *miri-piri*, and Guru Gobind, initiator of *Khalsa Panth*.¹³⁸ Both *miri-piri* and *Khalsa Panth* denote that there is ongoing war between the truth and evil.

¹³⁶ *India Today* (New Delhi), July 15, 1992.

¹³⁷ See Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 167.

¹³⁸ “Guru Gobind Singh baptized the Sikhs and made the carrying of weapons obligatory. It was also stressed that the use of violence for a sacred and a righteous cause, when all other methods had failed, was justified.” Singh, “The Politics of Religious Resurgence and Religious Terrorism,” 248.

Moreover, the inner conviction that one was fighting a battle on behalf of justice and the holiness guaranteed religious justification for any act of extreme violence against the targeted enemies; at the same time, there was assurance of divine grace and power. Therefore, Bhindranwale stressed that Sikhs should not feel weak though their enemies (the Hindus) were many times more than their numbers – in the holy battle numbers do not matter, but what matters is who is on which side, on the side of the divine or on the side of the evil. To reassure the inner conviction of the militant Sikhs he emphasized that the tenth guru himself affirmed that one Sikh can fight 125,000 enemies. This inner conviction seems to have filled many young Sikhs with passion to do or die for the sake of their ethno-religious identity. It was like a spiritual romance in which they obtained more pleasure through their violent activities against their, so-called, enemies. Moreover, the performance of violence against the enemies of Sikh faith, most probably, was re-enactment of sacrificial act performed by their tenth guru at Anandpur on the day the *Khalsa Panth* was initiated. In the act of violence one had to offer oneself as sacrificial victim, as demanded by the tenth guru at Anandpur, for the sake of their guru, Sikh faith and Sikh nation. Meanwhile, the life and testimony of the Sikh martyrs, beginning from Guru Arjan Dev,¹³⁹ could have added more inspiration to actively participate in the cosmic battle and die for the sake of their faith if necessary – death for them “was excitement, drama, a proof of their daring, their bravery, as true sons of the Khalsa.”¹⁴⁰

Meanwhile, the Indian military action against the holiest place of the Sikh might have further substantiated the religious concept that the enemies of the Sikhs were after the destruction of

¹³⁹ According to Pettigrew, the Sikhs has “fought and died for their community. The Sikh heritage was a past of 400 years of Muslim persecution: and these 400 years were packed with legends of brave actions. Sikh mythology consisted of accounts and tales of ancestors and heroes who in a very recent past fought and died for ‘community’.” J.Pettigrew, *Robber Noblemen: A Study of the Political System of the Sikh Jats* (England: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 80; quoted in Singh, “The Politics of Religious Resurgence and Religious Terrorism,” 249.

¹⁴⁰ Singh, “The Politics of Religious Resurgence and Religious Terrorism,” 249.

the Sikh religion. Therefore, the scene of destruction and desecration of the Golden temple and the deaths of Bhindranwale and other Sikh extremists inside the temple complex (during the army action) inspired more young Sikhs with the inner religious zeal to fight for the sake of their *Vahiguru* and their ethno-religious identity. “The violation of the Temple precincts and the death of their co-religionists,” writes R. H. Greenfield, “has inflamed even the most moderate” Sikhs.¹⁴¹ Many of those inflamed young Sikhs were spiritually motivated to join the Sikh terrorist groups to fight against the enemies of Sikhism. Furthermore, the military action against the Temple attested the religious concept of the cosmic battle and justification of violence of any form against the enemies that seek destruction of the good. Hence, the Sikh religious terrorism after Blue-star took horrifying form and crossed all human limitations in performance of acts of violence. At the same time, the involvement of other factors – like factionalism, ideological differences, personal interests and military counterinsurgency mechanisms – intensified the violent activities of Sikh religious terrorism during the post-Blue-star period.

II.11. Conclusion

In this chapter I endeavoured to make it obvious that the apprehension of losing the distinct *Khalsa* ethno-religious identity – which is very closely related with historical, social and geo-political factors – in the sea of resurgent Hinduism was the major concern that led to the rise of Sikh religious terrorism. Sikh religious identity fear factor had played a dynamic role in the innovation of modern Sikh (*Khalsa*) ethno-religious identity, which has become one of the key pillars of present Sikhism. However, this fear persisted in spite of the religio-political victory of the Sikh community (in 1925) against the *Mahants* and their Hindu supporters and the British government. The partition of the Punjab, the horror of death and destruction and

¹⁴¹*The Sunday Telegraph* (London), June 10, 1984; quoted in Dhillon, *India Commits Suicide*, 195.

partition of sacred places the Sikhs experienced reaffirmed the conception that their faith and community is at great risk. This view was further substantiated by: Nehruvian Congress' and Punjabi Hindus' opposition to their linguistic and political demands on religious ground; the development of unfavourable socio-political environment from the 1970s.

This case study underlines the following contributions: Sikhism embodies important religious symbols that can be manipulated to justify religious violence of any form; in Sikhism sacred and secular and spiritual and experiential aspects are inseparably intertwined; both the Sikh ethno-religious (*Khalsa* Sikh) identity and the land (Punjab, which the birth place of Sikhism) are vital for the survival of Sikh faith and community; the *Khalsa Panth* is considered (by radical and conservative Sikhs) as the only true repository of original Sikh faith, this is why other sectarian Sikh groups are regarded as enemies of Sikhism; the idea of cosmic war or *dharma yudh* can be stage-managed for socio-political objectives; the Sikh social-religious outlook includes the *Jat* attitude of courage and confrontation; the Sikh martyrs play very important role in the life of the Sikh community; religious antagonism against the Hindus and the sectarian Sikh factions germinated before the Indian independence; all the past and present socio-political issues and concerns are given religious connotations due to the inseparable interrelation between the sacred and secular. These points clarify why religion is vital force in the birth of the Sikh religious terrorism.

The following chapter will present a case study of Islamic religious terrorism in Kashmir. There are certain commonalities between Sikh religious terrorism and Kashmiri Islamic terrorism: firstly, they are the only known technically organized modern religious terrorist groups in India so far; secondly, they seem to battle against the same enemies – Hindu majority and allegedly Hindu biased Indian state; thirdly, both camps see no difference

between Hinduism and Indian state; fourthly, supposedly they get help from external forces (particularly Pakistani establishments) in their struggle against the Indian state; fifthly, both fight for their ethno-religious identity and their ancestral land and, at the same time, their main objectives are to liberate and to govern the lands with the given religious laws; sixthly, they (including the Hindu extremist groups) invoke the concept of *dharma yudh*/holy war or cosmic battle to justify religious terrorism; socio-political experiences, grievances and concerns are given religious meanings and values.

CHAPTER III

ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS TERRORISM

III.1. Introduction

For more than two decades Islamic terrorism has been a serious socio-political challenge to the Indian sub-continent. In India Islamic terrorism began in Kashmir in the late 1980s. From the early 1990s this force gained impetus and started spreading its tentacles of terrorist activities beyond the borders of Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmiri terrorist groups have been known for – besides attacks on the Indian military and paramilitary personnel and installations – killing of innocent civilians, attacks on people belonging to other faiths (mainly Hindus), bombing, breeding religious hatred, and other destructive activities in different parts of India. Moreover, some of the terrorist groups seem to have established links with some other terrorist organizations, within and outside India.

Although a great deal of research has been done by many social scientists (Sumit Ganguly, Reeta Chowdhari Tremblay, Riyaz Punjabi, Balraj Puri, Mohammad Ishaz Khan, Chitralkha Zutshi, Ashutosh Varshney and host of others) on the Kashmiri terrorism it is necessary to do this study for further investigation of the important motivating factor/factors that prompted the rise of the problem in Kashmir. In this case study I will attempt to establish that, in contrast to the existing views, the primary motivating factors for the rise of the Islamic terrorism in Kashmir were a strong combination of socio-historical experiences, political problems and radical Islamic religious ideologies. Hence, it is imperative to assess how the socio-religious and political environment from the time of the *Dogra* period produced negative impact among the Muslim community in Kashmir and how this negative effect turned into religious hatred or antagonism. Moreover, in the post-independent India this

antagonism had been further aggravated by various factors, like political, religious and cultural grievances.

This chapter is arranged in the following order. Firstly, to initiate the debate on the Islamic religious terrorism in India, I discuss in brief the beginning, aim and objective of Kashmiri militant movement. Secondly, explanations of different scholars on the origin of the militancy in Kashmir are examined and disputed. Thirdly, a short review of the socio-political condition of the Kashmiri people, during the *Dogra* period, is presented. The purpose of this review is to explain how and why a deep-seated antagonism developed among the Kashmiri Muslim community against the Hindu rulers and their Hindu counterparts from the time of *Dogra* rule and how that antagonism was further aggravated by the Indian state later on. Fourthly, I analyse the theological disputes that began in the late 19th century in the Kashmir valley and the Muslim uprising in 1931 and consider how Islamic religious ideologies could have played a significant role in the uprising. Fifthly, I briefly assess the political problem of Kashmir during the transitional period. Sixthly, a study is done on why there was no militancy in Kashmir before 1988, and how the socio-historical context, political issues and radical Islamic religious ideologies collectively played a fundamental role in motivating religious terrorism in Kashmir in the late 1980s. Then, very concisely Kashmiri terrorist groups, particularly *Lashkar-e-Toiba* and its ideology, are assessed. Finally, suggestion towards solution of the problem, outline of the contributions of the Chapter and conclusions are offered.

III.2. Beginning, Aim and Objective of the Kashmiri Militant Movement

Islamic Militant activities began in Kashmir in 1988 – the militant violence is termed as “ethnoreligious and secessionist violence”¹ by some scholars like Sumit Ganguli. In July,

¹ Sumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace* (Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press and Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1.

1988, the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), a pro-independence and the oldest Kashmiri militant group, launched an armed struggle against the Indian rule over Jammu and Kashmir.² The main objective of the JKLF was to achieve independence and union of both sides of Kashmir – Pakistan occupied Kashmir (known as “Azad” or “Free” Kashmir) and Indian Kashmir. This aim of the JKLF neither was acceptable to India or nor to Pakistan; therefore, lack of Pakistani training and support, on the one hand, and the heavy military repressive measures of the Indian state, on the other hand, marginalized this group within a couple of years. In the next few years the group was split several times, and the largest surviving faction of the JKLF declared a unilateral ceasefire in 1994.³

From the last part of 1989 the armed movement was taken over by other well trained, better armed and hardened Islamic militant groups, like the *Hijb-ul Mujahideen* (HuM – Party of Holy Warriors), who were provided training, arms and support by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Agency of Pakistan.⁴ The aspiration of these Islamic militant groups is to seek the union of both parts of Kashmir and merge (the united Kashmir) with Pakistan.⁵ The objective of these Kashmiri militants is religio-political one; nevertheless, in Islam religion and politics are so interlinked that they are “like two sides of a same coin”⁶ – Prophet

² Alexander Evans, “The Kashmir Insurgency: As Bad as It Gets,” in *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol. II, No. 1 (Spring 2000), 69.

³ Evans, “The Kashmir Insurgency,” 69.

⁴ Sumit Ganguly and Kanti Bajpai, “India and the Crisis in Kashmir,” in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 34, No.5 (May 1994), 405; Atul Kohli, “Can Democracies Accommodate Ethnic Nationalism? Rise and Decline of Self-Determination Movements in India,” in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (May, 1997), 341.

⁵ Reeta Chowdhari Tremblay, “Kashmir’s Secessionist Movement Resurfaces: Ethnic Identity, Community Competition, and the State,” in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 49, Issue 6 (2009), 935.

⁶ G.H.Jansen, *Militant Islam* (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1979), 17. In Islam a defining feature, according to Mervyn K. Lewis, “is that Islam commands authority over the totality of a Muslim’s being, not accepting any distinction between the sacred and the secular [...] In Islam, the realms of God and Caesar are not separate jurisdictions. Two aspects in particular shape the nature of Islamic corporate governance. One is that Islamic

Muhammad and his first four successors (the first four *Khalifas*, who are being honoured as the righteous *Khalifas* by all Sunni Muslims) did not differentiate sacred (spiritual) and secular (temporal) aspects; they were both spiritual and political heads/leaders.⁷ Thus, to achieve their goal the Kashmiri militants began to carry out whatever violent attacks they could plan against their supposed enemy targets. Owing to the violent activities of the Islamic militants there was a mass exodus of more than two hundred thousand Kashmiri Hindus (generally known as *Pandits*)⁸ – who had been coexisting with their Muslim brethren in Kashmir for several centuries – to Jammu and other parts of Northern India in 1989,⁹ and more than ten thousand (according to some conservative estimates at least forty thousand) lives were lost¹⁰ within the first decade of the militant violence. Furthermore, their violent activities were not constrained within the territory of Jammu and Kashmir. They have been, directly or indirectly, involved in several deadly bomb blasts that killed and injured hundreds of people in Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad and other places in India. Such violent activities make it evident that the intention of these militants is to cause and spread terror all over India with the aim of achieving the given religio-political goal.

law, the *Shari'ah* claims sovereignty over all aspects of life, ethical and social, and to encompass criminal as well as civil jurisdiction. The literal meaning of the Arabic word *Shari'ah* 'the way to the source of life' and, in technical sense, it is now used to refer to a legal system in keeping with the code of behaviour called for by the Holy Qur'an and the *Sunnah* (the authentic tradition [the tradition of the Prophet]). Every act of believers must conform with Islamic law and observe ethical standards derived from Islamic principles. These ethical principles define what is true, fair and just, the nature of corporate responsibilities, the priorities to society, along with some specific governance standards." Mervyn K. Lewis, "Islamic Corporate Governance," in *Review of Islamic Economics*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2005), 14-15.

⁷In the view of Sayyid Qutb, "Muhammad dictated a strict new law code, which put religion once more at ease in physical world, except a better way than ever before. Muhammad's prophecies, in the Koran, instructed man to be God's 'vice regent' on earth – to take charge of the physical world and not simply to see it as something alien to spirituality." Paul Berman, "The Philosopher of Islamic Terror," in *The New York Times* (23 March, 2003), IV.

⁸ Sumit Ganguly, "Explaining the Kashmir Insurgency: Political Mobilization and Institutional Decay," in *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Autumn 1996), 76.

⁹ Tremblay, "Kashmir's Secessionist Movement Resurfaces," 926.

¹⁰ Kohli, "Can Democracies Accommodate Ethnic Nationalism?," 338.

III.3. What Prompted the Rise of the Kashmiri Militancy in the late 1980s?

The existing arguments on the rise of the Kashmiri militant movement can be divided into two categories: 1) the explanations of the apologists for the Indian and the Pakistani governments; 2) the observations of the social scientists. Apologists for the Indian government argue that the problem was created by Pakistan with its subversive plan to destabilise Indian Kashmir. They claim that Pakistan has been involved in inculcating Islamic fundamentalism in the Kashmir valley from late 1970s. These apologists hold that once Pakistani masterminds cease to provide training, arms and help, and “call off their terrorist underlings” violence in Jammu and Kashmir will end and a “peaceful settlement be achieved.”¹¹ This argument comfortably dumps the major responsibility for the misfortunes of the Kashmiri people at the doorstep of Pakistan, and vindicates Indian leaders of political negligence and mismanagement for the violence and military brutality in the state.¹² Therefore, this explanation sounds incomplete and one-sided because it tends to forget the grievances of the Kashmiri people against the Indian state and the role of Indian state in the aggravation of the crisis in Kashmir. Whereas the Pakistan government has defensively argued that the Kashmir problem is the outcome of “historical betrayals, constitutional despotism, negation of socio-cultural identity, religious discrimination, economic deprivation and state repression, besides 43 years of misrule and manipulation by Delhi.”¹³ But, in this argument there is no mention of the involvement of Pakistan’s ISI in providing training, arms

¹¹ Robert G. Wirsing, *India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Dispute: On Original Conflict and Its Resolution* (London: Macmillan Press, 1994), 115; this is the argument of Afsir Karim, *Counter Terrorism: The Pakistan Factor* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1991).

¹² Wirsing, *India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Dispute*, 115.

¹³ Shaheen Akhtar, *Uprising in Indian-Held Jammu and Kashmir* (Islamabad: Institute of Regional Studies, 1991), 48; quoted in Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir*, 16.

and support to the militant groups, like HuM and *Lashkar-e-Toiba* (LeT);¹⁴ therefore, this explanation rather gives the impression that the argument is put forward to justify the Pakistani involvement in supporting the Kashmiri militancy.

Reeta Chowdhari Tremblay, Riyaz Punjabi, Balraj Puri, Mohammad Ishaz Khan, Chitralkha Zutshi, Ashutosh Varshney, Stephen Cohen, Neil Aggarwal, Imtiaz Bokhari, Perry Thornton, Patricia Ellis, Zafar Khan, Deepak Lal, Mohammed Ayoob and Sumit Ganguly attempt to locate the origin of the Kashmiri militancy in the conflict of compelling nationalist ideologies, widespread electoral malpractices, collapse of the fused Kashmiri identity (*Kashmiriyat*), or the rise of disappointed middle class.¹⁵

III.3.1. Disintegration of the Traditional Bond of *Kashmiriyat*

Kashmiriyat (Kashmiriness or the state of being a Kashmiri) generally denotes Kashmiri identity that cuts across religious division. Therefore, this concept has been described by various intellectuals as synthetic and syncretic (also symbiotic) Kashmiri identity. The key elements that define *Kashmiriyat* are the love for Kashmir (the motherland) and common language (*Koshur*). In the view of Balraj Puri, Mohammad Ishaq Khan, Zutshi and Riyaz Punjabi the concept of *Kashmiriyat* symbolizes a common Kashmiri culture that does not have religious connotation. This concept, opines Khan, “has evolved out of the yearning of the Kashmiri, both Hindus and Muslims, to situate their motherland (*Mouj Kashir*) in something unique;” however, “something unique is not merely reminiscent of their preoccupation with self-definition but also with certain historical contradictions.”¹⁶

¹⁴ See Evans, “The Kashmir Insurgency: As Bad as It Gets,” 70 & 71.

¹⁵ Ganguly, “Explaining the Kashmir Insurgency,” 78.

¹⁶ Mohammad Ishaq Khan, “The Rishi Tradition and the Construction Kashmiriyat,” in *Lived Islam in South Asia: Adaptation, Accommodation and Conflict*, edited by Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2004), 63.

Kashmiriyat, for Puri, had been the most dominating, homogeneous and crucial part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. He says, “the Kashmiris have always perceived their identity as distinct and separate” from other regions of India; therefore, this exclusively Kashmiri identity encompassed all sections (Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists) of the Kashmiri society.¹⁷ According to Riyaz Punjabi the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir embody very unique socio-cultural characteristics; and both Kashmiri Muslims and Hindus represent customs and traditions which are distinct from their counterparts elsewhere in the subcontinent. *Kashmiriyat* flourished in the pre-partition period therefore there was ethnic harmony among the different ethnic communities in Kashmir. During the time of partition there was no communal tension in the Kashmir Valley; instead

The Valley provided asylum to many a Hindu sufferer from the neighbouring areas of the valley which were scene of communal riots. There was no communal riot at the time of the partition in any part of the valley. This is perhaps why Gandhiji saw a ‘ray of hope’ in Kashmir.¹⁸

Therefore, the Kashmir crisis, in his opinion, is caused by the disintegration of this Kashmiri cultural identity, which was the fusion of diverse Kashmiri cultures.¹⁹ The central government’s policy of promoting and supporting the unpopular regime in Kashmir, he asserts, gradually alienated the Muslim population and the traditional bond in the common vision of *Kashmiriyat* fell apart and gave birth to the problem.

Although the so-called *Kashmiriyat*, the concept of integrated Kashmiri identity, sounds fascinating the ground reality, however, was that the Kashmiri society was deeply divided on

¹⁷ Balraj Puri, “Kashmiriyat: The Vitality of Kashmiri Identity,” in *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1995), 55.

¹⁸ Riyaz Punjabi, “Communal Politics in Jammu and Kashmir State,” in *Contemporary South Asia* (1995), 159.

¹⁹ Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir*, 17-18.

the religious and the sectarian line from the time of the *Dogra* period²⁰ – this point will be discussed further later on. Furthermore, the concept of *Kashmiriyat* was developed by Zain-ul-Abdeen, a Muslim ruler of fourteenth century, to serve his political or administrative purpose. However, the *Dogra* kings, who hailed from Jammu region, identified themselves with Hindu community and favoured Hindus and Sikhs in both religious and political areas against the Muslims. According to Zutshi, the *Dogra* regime was responsible for bestowing distinct political identity upon the Muslim community of Kashmir.²¹ The idea of integrated Kashmiri identity was further shattered by the Muslim uprising against the *Dogra* Hindu rulers (which will be assessed in later sections) in early 1930s. For Kashmiri Muslims the Kashmiri Hindus (*Pandits*) represented their oppressors or enemies rather than their Kashmiri brethren,²² and this impression continued after the Indian independence. Hence, the disintegration of the fused Kashmiri identity could not be practically reasonable for the rise of the crisis in Kashmir.

III.3.2. Assertions of Religious, Ethnic and Secular Nationalism

Ashutosh Varshney contends that the competing assertions of three types of nationalism – religious, ethnic and secular – gave rise to the militancy in Kashmir.²³ These three types of nationalism, he contends, were compromised, particularly in Kashmir, for the purpose of nation-building and political convenience; therefore, the Kashmir problem is the product of

²⁰ See Chitralekha Zutshi, *Language of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity, and the Making of Kashmir* (London: Hurst & Company, 2004), 148.

²¹ Zutshi, *Language of Belonging*, 139

²² Zutshi, *Language of Belonging*, 233.

²³ Ashutosh Varshney, “Three Compromised Nationalisms: Why Kashmir has been a Problem,” in *Perspectives on Kashmir: The Roots of Conflict in South Asia*, edited by Raju G. C. Thomas (Boulder: Westview, 1992), 191 ff.

the clash of national visions that was compromised.²⁴ Mainly four parties and two factors, in the view of Varshney, have been involved in this regard. Four parties are: Pakistan, Indian state, Hindu nationalism and Kashmiri Muslim ethno-religious nationalism. From the beginning of its birth Pakistan has represented Islamic nationalism, and has claimed that it has unqualified right over Kashmir because, the State is dominated by Muslim majority; therefore, it has been employing both overt and covert tactics to win over the Kashmiris and merge the Indian Kashmir into Pakistan. Indian state symbolizes secular nationalism, but it has not been able to restrain the aggressive outlook of the Hindu religious nationalism that seems “to demonstrate the most virulent form of nationalism” and prefers “to recall Babar and Aurangzad, the intolerant Moghul rulers, rather than Akbar, the tolerant one.”²⁵ In the meantime, the Indian political leaders mismanaged Indian secularism and used religion for their political goal. Meanwhile, the Kashmiri ethno-religious nationalism has aspired for the separation of Kashmir from Indian Union on the ground that it is an object of “terrible nationalist repression” on the basis of religion. The two factors are: availability of deadly weapons in plenty in many parts of the world; and the modern information technology such as videos and televisions. The first aspect made the “ethnicity – and the response to it – more brutal in unprecedented ways,” and the second one imparted “a new emotional intensity that is not the same as reading or hearing about one’s own community on an insurgency path or in watching security forces roll it back.”²⁶ Militants make use of the information technology to serve their purpose, i.e., to spread their propaganda. Thus, on account of these (the above-

²⁴ See Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir*, 19.

²⁵ Ashutosh Varshney, “India, Pakistan, and Kashmir: Antinomies of Nationalism,” in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 31, No. 11 (Nov., 1991), 998.

²⁶ Varshney, “India, Pakistan, and Kashmir,” 998.

given parties and factors), he maintains, the Kashmir problem, which dates back to partition period, has taken violent form and has consumed the lives of many people.

If the Kashmir problem, as admitted by Varshney, has began from the time of the partition, then why did it took so long for it to take present violent form? Even though the modern information technology was not available then, weapons could be supplied by foreign forces (as in the case of Naga and other militant groups in Northeast India) if Kashmiri people were ready for an armed rebellion against the Indian state and Hindu society; but it did not happen. Varshney's explanation does not give a definite answer to this query. Moreover, this argument seems to be mainly based on the external, like interference of the Cold War politics, and the internal Indian politics during the late 1970s and the early 1980s. The main weakness in this argument is that Varshney fails to link the problem to its historical background, on the one hand, and the communal dispute that began in Kashmir in 1930s (this will be discussed later on), on the other.

III.3.3. Breakdown of the Original Relationship between the Centre and the State of Jammu and Kashmir

Reeta Tremblay, in her article "Kashmir's Secessionist Movement Resurfaces," acknowledges the involvement of entirely internal dynamics in the rise of the militancy; at the same time, she admits that Pakistani and the Islamic *Jihadi* (holy war) elements have, to some extent, played a role in the organization and continuation of the militant movement.²⁷ According to Tremblay, the following issues were accountable for the origin of the militancy: breakdown of the originally invented relationship (ref. Appendix 4 for explanation on "breakdown of the originally invented relationship") between the Centre and the state of Jammu and Kashmir;

²⁷ See Tremblay, "Kashmir's Secessionist Movement Resurfaces."

corrosion of the state's autonomy granted by the Article 370 of the Indian Constitution as a result of the adoption of constitutional measures from 1953, the year in which Mohammad Abdullah (also known as Sheikh Abdullah) was deposed from his position as Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, till 1975, for the rapid consolidation of the state within the Indian union; lack of economic development of Kashmir; and finally, the rigging of 1987 election depriving election victory to the Muslim United Front candidates.²⁸

Tremblay seems to mostly rely on the political and economic factors that developed after 1953, to explain the cause of the problem. No doubt the political developments contributed towards the eruption of the problem but, they were, to use D.N. Danagara's words, the symptoms only, not the disease²⁹ – in reality the disease began to develop before the Indian independence. The problem began like a volcanic formation deep below the surface from a certain point of time in the past and erupted in the late 1980s. The above argument fails to investigate, for the explanation of the problem, the socio-historical context of the Kashmiri Muslim community during the *Dogra* rule. Further, the argument does not examine the possibility of the role of Islamic religious ideologies, which justify violence on the basis of socio-historical and political experiences of the Muslim community of Kashmir, for the rise of the Islamic terrorism in Kashmir; therefore, this argument fails to explain the main cause of the problem adequately.

²⁸ Reeta Chowdhari Tremblay, "Review: Kashmir Conflict: Secessionist Movement, Mobilization and Political Institutions," in *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 4, (Winter, 2001-2002), 575. Tremblay, "Kashmir's Secessionist Movement Resurfaces," 931;

²⁹ D.N. Danagara, "Agrarian Conflict, Religion and Politics: The Moplah Rebellions in Malabar in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," in *Past and Present*, 74 (1977), 141.

III.3.4. Re-eruption of the Problem left Unsolved in 1947

Cohen, Aggarwal, Bokhari, Thornton, Ellis and Khan are of the opinion that the Kashmir extremism took birth due to the problem that has been left unresolved from the time of partition. Some of the above mentioned thinkers blame the Colonial power for throwing Kashmir into the present imbroglio. According to Stephen Cohen, “Kashmir originally came into dispute because of a British failure of will when they divided and quit India in 1947.”³⁰ For Cohen the method with which the fate of the princely states was sorted out was not competent enough. Thence, the political leaders of both India and Pakistan “compounded the original problem when they turned Kashmir into a badge of their respective national identities.”³¹ So, from this time Kashmir became the bone of contention between the two countries. Neil Aggarwal too contends that the Kashmir problem is the outcome of the unfinished business of partition.³² The partition, point out Imtiaz Bokhari and Perry Thornton, laid the groundwork for the today’s unresolved problem of Kashmir.³³ The Hindu ruler of Jammu and Kashmir “joined his state to India in a clear violation of the intent, if not the letter, of partition;” and from that time, in their observation, Kashmir became the apple of discord between India and Pakistan. Patricia Ellis and Zafar Khan argue that the rise of the Kashmiri militancy is the re-eruption, in a more powerful form, of the problem left unsolved in 1947; because, according to them, many of the Kashmir’s population had never accepted the

³⁰ Stephen P. Cohen, “Kashmir: The Roads Ahead,” in *South Asia Approaches the Millennium: Reexamining National Security*, edited by Marvin G. Weinbaum and Chetan Kumar (Oxford: Westview Press, 1995). 129.

³¹ Cohen, “Kashmir: The Roads Ahead,” 129.

³² See Neil Aggarwal, “Kashmiriyat as Empty Signifier,” in *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2008), 222-235.

³³ Imtiaz H. Bokhari and Thomas Perry Thornton, *The 1972 Simla Agreement: An Asymmetrical Negotiation* (Washington, D. C.: Foreign Policy Institute, 1988), 1.

partition of Kashmir between India and Pakistan.³⁴ This unsolved problem, in their understanding, triggered off the eruption of the Kashmir crisis in the late 1980s.

The partition and the unsettled problem of Kashmir since 1947 has been one of the major concerns of the people of Kashmir. The Kashmiris have been struggling for, what they consider, their birth right from the time the land came within the Indian Union; however, their struggle did not take violent form till the late 1980s. This argument does not make it clear why it took almost half a century for the re-eruption of the problem if many of the Kashmiri people had never accepted the partition of Kashmir. At the same time, the people had an ample opportunity to rise against the Indian state in the 1960s and in the early 1970s, because during this period Pakistan and India fought two wars – one over Kashmir and the other over Bangladesh. The Kashmiris could have sided with or supported Pakistan during the wars, but they did not do so. One cannot deny that partition is one of the major international and internal political concerns of India, Pakistan and Kashmiri people of both sides of Kashmir; however, this political issue alone does not satisfactorily explain the cause in the rise of the Kashmiri militancy in the 1980s.

III.3.5. Hindu Organisations, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi were Accountable for the Crisis

Two factors are involved in this argument: political and communal factors. Mrs. Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi are blamed for political failure in Kashmir due to their party politics. In the view of Punjabi, the state of Jammu and Kashmir represented a strong tradition of secularism. This strong tradition began to drift away from its past due to “the political phenomenon and

³⁴ Patricia Ellis and Zafar Khan, “Partition and Kashmir: Implications for the Region and the Diaspora,” in *Region & Partition: Bengal, Punjab and the Partition of the Subcontinent*, edited by Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 270.

power-game.”³⁵ This political power-game, he thinks, to a large extent contributed towards polarization of the population of the state in communal line and strengthened the communal forces in the state. “The politics of Kashmir in the 1980s,” says Deepak Lal, “is one of rigged elections, with the Congress Party attempting to gain control over the state.”³⁶ The Congress under the leadership of Mrs. Gandhi was blamed for engineering split in the National Conference Party of Farooq Abdullah and dismissal of him from the post of chief ministers in 1984. According to one Indian bureaucrat, with long years of service in Jammu and Kashmir, the “critical event” in triggering off the armed insurgency took place in July 1984 when the popular chief minister of the state, Farooq Abdullah, was deposed from his post with “the behind-the-scenes assistance of New Delhi.”³⁷ From that time, he contends, psychological alienation of Kashmiri people from the Indian state started, before that incidence many Kashmiris thought that the Kashmir problem was over. Meanwhile, Hindu communal forces have been indicted by Kashmiri Muslims as well as other intellectuals for inciting Hindu communalism in Jammu region, where Hindu population has two third majorities. Mohammed Ayoob in the article, “Dateline India: The Deepening Crisis,” holds accountable the Hindu religious and political organizations (the BJP, the RSS, the *Shiv Sena*, and the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad*) and Indira and Rajiv Gandhi for the birth of the militancy in Kashmir.³⁸ According to Ayoob, both Indira and Rajiv, for their temporary electoral gain,

³⁵ Punjabi, “Communal Politics in Jammu and Kashmir State,” 164.

³⁶ Deepak Lal, “Kashmir,” Paper for Carnegie Project on Globalization, National Self-determination and Terrorism, University of California, Los Angeles (December 2003), 9.

³⁷ Wirsing, *India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Dispute*, 116.

³⁸ Mohammed Ayoob, “Dateline India: The Deepening Crisis,” in *Foreign Policy*, No. 85, (Winter, 1991-1992), 178.

“condoned Hindu communalism by pandering to chauvinistic instincts within the religious majority.”³⁹

This argument focuses on the detrimental political development that began to take place from the late 1970s. It is true that the atmosphere of the Indian politics began to deteriorate owing to the waning popularity of Indira and her Congress party and the active involvement of the Hindu communal politics. Such political atmosphere, without doubt, helped to further antagonise the minorities – like Sikhs and Muslims – and pushed them to the point of the explosion in 1980s. But the root of the Kashmiri problem began, as hinted in the earlier sections and will be dealt with in the later sections, long before the birth of *the Vishwa Hindu Parishad*, the BJP, the *Shiv Sena* and the entry of Gandhis in the Indian politics.

III.3.6. Political Mobilization and Institutional Decay

Moreover, Sumit Ganguly attempts to offer more satisfactory explanation of the reasons for both the origin and the timing of the militant movement in Kashmir. He has challenged the other arguments by proposing a new explanation to the problem. Thus, political mobilization and institutional decay, he maintains, best explains the origin and timing of the militancy in Kashmir. Political mobilization, according to him, had taken place very rapidly all over India and in Kashmir in particular, as a result of the national policies and projects. In the meantime, successive central governments had done little to strengthen the institutional politics in Jammu and Kashmir.⁴⁰

Political mobilization, as defined by Ganguly, is a type of political awakening with the passion for political participation, and this awakening is created by “increased literacy, media

³⁹ Ayoub, “Dateline India: The Deepening Crisis,” 178.

⁴⁰ Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir*, 20-21.

exposure, and economic development.”⁴¹ He confirms that: there was speedy growth in literacy rates in the Kashmir valley during 1960s and 1970s due to the increasing number of educational institutions in the area. According to him, during the period starting from 1971 to 1981 the growth of literacy rate in Jammu and Kashmir was more than forty three percent, which was the third fastest growth rate in India. Along with the expansion of formal education there was rapid growth of *madrassas* (Islamic educational institutions) in Kashmir – from 1983 there was further boost in the growth of *Madrassas* in the Kashmir valley due to the inflow of Pakistani money and migration of Bangladeshi Mullahs (religious leaders) from Assam due to the violence against Bangladeshi population in Assam.⁴² At the same time, the Kashmiri people were exposed to the mass media due to the rapid expansion of the technology in Jammu and Kashmir. Hence, Ganguly observes that with the speedy growth of literacy rate and exposure to mass media the Kashmiri people of 1980s were far more conscious of their “political rights and privileges,”⁴³ and were highly politically mobilized people. Therefore, the Kashmiris, being regularly “denied their voting rights in deeply flawed elections,” were filled with bitterness against the malpractices of the Indian state and this bitterness had turned into violence.⁴⁴

Ganguly’s argument better explains the timing of the militancy instead of the cause of the problem. According to Ganguly’s observation there was chaotic imbalance between the socio-economic-educational development and the development of institutional politics in Jammu and Kashmir. This chaotic imbalance plus electoral malpractices, according to him, explicate

⁴¹ Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir*, 21.

⁴² Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir*, 31-32.

⁴³ Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir*, 36-37.

⁴⁴ Ganguly, “Explaining the Kashmir Insurgency,” 80.

main reason of the rise of the militancy in the 1980s. But, Ganguly does not attempt to explain sufficiently the role and influence of the religious leaders (Mullahs – who could have been instrumental in radicalisation of many young Muslims in Kashmir and other parts of India) and religious institutions (*Madrassas* – where Muslim children and young people are being radicalised⁴⁵) in the life of the Muslim community in Jammu and Kashmir. Further, this argument does not take into consideration the socio-historical background of the pre-1947 Kashmiri people in relation to the present development. Hence, this argument too is deficient in providing the satisfactory explanation to the cause of the problem.

All the above-arguments are partial explanations of the cause of the Kashmir problem. The above-discussed issues, without doubt, had contributed considerable amount of force in the eruption of the militancy, but none of them give satisfactory answers to the following questions. Why did Kashmiri militants target Kashmiri Hindus (who were a small minority)? Why did the Indian state (in spite of its constant effort towards economic and educational developments of Kashmir during 1960s and 1970s) fail to gain the confidence/trust of the Kashmiri people (Muslims)? Why did hardcore Islamic terrorists begin to grow (in number and capability to strike intended targets anywhere in India) despite Kashmir being heavily militarized by the Indian state? Apparently without a strong support of the Kashmiri Muslim community (may be a section of the community) foreign terrorists or mercenaries would not be able to survive for long in the battle against almost half a million strong Indian military force stationed in Kashmir from the time Islamic militancy took birth in the state.

Meanwhile, in the mobilization of the Islamic religious constituency with the objective of achieving a religio-political goal, the motivating aspect should have the dynamism to inspire

⁴⁵ On Islamic radicalisation in *madrassas* see S. Kalayanraman, "India and the Challenge of Terrorism in the Hinterland," in *Strategic Analysis*, vol. 34, issue 5 (2010), 702-716; also, Jamal Malik, *Madrassa in South Asia: Teaching of Terror* (London: Routledge, 2008).

both spiritual and physical spheres of the members of the religious community/group. In this regard only radical Islamic religious concepts, like “jihad” (holy war) against the enemies of Islam, could play such powerful role. “Jihad” (“literally, jihad means to strive”), as found in the Quran, may not always mean fighting. Jihad, in the view of al-Bukhari (one of the greatest Islamic theologians) means *Istidsha* (martyrdom) rather than murder or killing. “According to Muslim theology,” said al-Bukhari, “the highest act of love that a person could offer to Allah is his or her own martyrdom.”⁴⁶ However,

All Muslims agree that the Quran allows Muslims to fight in two main circumstances: self-defence and to maintain their right to worship. Yet each Muslim can decide when self-defence is needed or when the worship of Allah is jeopardized. Again personal interpretation is far more relevant in understanding jihad than the literal text.⁴⁷

Therefore, from the early period of Islam the concept has been associated with warfare and conquest⁴⁸ against the enemies of Islam. Thus, the concept of Jihad seems to have played a very significant role in motivating Kashmiri Muslims for religious violence/terrorism against their perceived enemies. Moreover, from the time of *Dogra* period the Kashmiri Muslim society had been struggling against two different forces (enemies) – the Hindu rulers and their Hindu supporters, on the one hand, and different sectarian (particularly the Kashmiri Sufi order) religious teachings that, according to orthodox Muslims, dilute Islam, on the other

⁴⁶ Gabriele Marranci, *Jihad Beyond Islam* (New York: Berg, 2006), 22. On the question “Is Jihad a holy war?,” Marranci writes: “Although the majority of Muslims emphatically reject such an axiom, we must recognize that historically a straightforward answer does not exist. During their histories, the Islamic states had to face a difficult decision: to interpret the Qur’anic teaching so that any imperialistic aspirations had to be renounced, or to venture into philosophical and theological sophisms and combine their earthly desires with Allah’s injunctions. Since power and territorial control are difficult to renounce, Islamic leaders have a privileged political interpretation of jihad over the spiritual elements of Islam. Jihad cannot be understood outside the historical contexts and events. Marranci, *Jihad Beyond*, 17 & 18.

⁴⁷ “Muslims have not shaped their contemporary idea of jihad only through the Quran and the Prophet’s *Sunna*. The Islamic judicial traditions (*fiqh*), the history of the ummah (community of believers) and the formation of the Ottoman empire have played a fundamental role in sifting the meaning of jihad towards holy war.” Marranci, *Jihad Beyond*, 22. Also, see Reuven Fireston, *Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5ff.

⁴⁸ John C. Zimmerman, ‘A Review of: “Michael Bonner. Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice,”’ in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 20:1 (January, 2008), 150.

hand. Therefore, I suggest the combination of socio-historical context, political issues and radical Islamic religious ideologies played the fundamental role in the birth of militancy in Kashmir. The mobilization of the religious constituency by exploiting certain Islamic religious texts and symbols justifying acts of violence against so-called enemies on the basis of socio-historical experiences, religious conviction and political grievances could explain both the origin and the timing of the outbreak of the Kashmir problem more adequately. To comprehend the socio-religio-historical context of the Kashmiri Muslim community it is necessary to briefly review the socio-political environment of Kashmir during the period of *Dogra* rule.

III.4. Pre-1947 Jammu and Kashmir: Socio-Political Context during the Period of *Dogra* Rule

Kashmir has been known for its rich natural beauty and splendour that enchanted people from far and wide. Several writers call it “the fabled”⁴⁹ land or the paradise on earth. As its scenic beauty enthralled many foreigners so also the land fascinated many foreign rulers to make it their dominion. The Kashmir valley, known as the Vale of Kashmir, went under the Muslim rule in the fourteenth century; then, in 1752 Akbar, the Mogul Emperor of India, made it a part of his kingdom, and from this time the Kashmir valley became the summer residence of the successive Mogul rulers. With the decline of Mogul reign the control of the land passed on to the Afghans and then to Sikh maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1819. After the death of Ranjit Singh, Gulab Singh, who was *Dogra* Hindu *Rajput* and Rajah of Jammu, bought the land from the British.⁵⁰ According to the Treaty of Amritsar, writes Rekha Chowdhary, “the state was sold to Maharajah Gulab Singh by the British for seventy-five lakhs [seven and half

⁴⁹ Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir*, 1.

⁵⁰ Alastair Lamb, *Crisis in Kashmir: 1947 to 1966* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 23.

million] of rupees and Maharaja became the supreme sovereign of the state.”⁵¹ Thus, the *Dogra* rulers were responsible for the creation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir as a single political entity in 1846. The *Dogra* kings ruled Kashmir for a century before it was accessed to India.

Hence, it is indispensable to have a bird’s eye view of the socio-political context of the people of Jammu and Kashmir during the time of the *Dogra* rule in explaining the rise of the Islamic terrorism in Kashmir in late 1980s; because, the mobilization of Muslim constituency with the slogan “Islam in danger” began in Kashmir in the early 1930s. In 1931 a Muslim uprising, the first of its kind during whole period of the *Dogra* rule, took place in the Kashmir valley and this unrest was mainly inspired by religious factors. The incident made two things obvious: first, the communal cleavage between Hindus and Muslims began to emerge in Jammu and Kashmir; and second, consciousness of community identity and aspiration for socio-religious freedom were fully developed among the Muslims of the Kashmir valley. Moreover, after more than eight decades of its oppressive rule against the dominant Muslim majority in Kashmir the authority of the *Dogra* regime was seriously challenged by this rebellion. So, the root of the present Kashmir problem can be traced back to this historical antecedent – according to Mridu Rai, Kashmir’s problems began from the time of the *Dogra* regime owing to the regime’s anti-Muslim – religious, economic and political - policies.⁵²

⁵¹ Rekha Chowdahry, “Political Upsurge in Kashmir: Then and Now,” in *Economic and Political Weekly* (30 September, 1995), 158.

⁵² See Mridu Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Islam, Rights, and the History of Kashmir* (London: Hurst & Company, 2004).

III.4.1. Religio-Political Economy of Dogra Regime

The *Dogra* rulers had been oppressive from the outset of their reign over the Muslim subjects of Jammu and Kashmir. According to Alastair Lamb, the *Dogra* rule was corrupt and discriminatory because it favoured Hindus and Sikhs.⁵³ Probably due to the unusually submissive nature of the Muslim peasantry (in the view of Tyndale Biscoe “a people whose ‘manhood’ had been crushed by exploitation,”⁵⁴) the *Dogra* rulers could rule over them for almost a century without any threat to their oppressive administration. The *Dogra* kings regarded the Kashmiri Muslim peasants as their slaves, and did not grant them “equal opportunities in trade, industry, education, jobs, agriculture and above all for their upliftment as a community culture.”⁵⁵ Therefore, the Muslim peasants under the regime had no identity, except as a race of slaves. In the early twentieth century, as narrated by Biscoe, Muslim peasants in Kashmir Valley lived in virtual enslavement with no conception of rights.⁵⁶ They did not have the freedom to practice their religion as the Hindus and the Sikhs did, because the legal system of the regime was Hindu and Sikh biased. “Muslims,” writes Bose, “were generally not permitted to become officers in the state’s military, which was led by Sikhs and Hindu ‘martial’ castes such as *Dogras* and *Rajputs*, and were virtually unrepresented in the state’s civil administration.”⁵⁷ The *Dogra* rulers were communal, casteist and racist, therefore, the Kashmiri Muslims had to bear triple burden of suffering. It was communal because it was Hindu biased and provided opportunity to the Hindus, from outside the Kashmir Valley, to set

⁵³ Lamb, *Crisis in Kashmir*, 27-28.

⁵⁴ Sumantra Bose, *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 18.

⁵⁵ Prakash Chandra, “The National Questions in Kashmir,” in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 13, No. 6 (June, 1985), 39.

⁵⁶ Bose, *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace*, 17.

⁵⁷ Bose, *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace*, 17.

up business, trade and industry.⁵⁸ The racial character of the rulers was made obvious by their practice of favouring *Dogras* (their own people) as superior to all other as in the case of British colonial power under the auspices of whom the regime worked. One of the laws established by the regime was that any other person, except a *Dogra*, could be hanged. Moreover, the Muslims were regarded as outcastes or untouchables and slaves. The communal, racist and casteist structure and policy of the *Dogra* rule disadvantaged the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir economically, educationally and socially. They might have accepted their economic and socio-political condition as their karma – Hindus believe that the low-birth is the fruit of past evil actions. Though the caste system and law of karma was un-Islamic the majority of Kashmiri Muslims, being converted from Hinduism, were yet to be free from certain Hindu beliefs and practices. This might be the reason why Maqbool Shah, in his poem, wrote:

They [the peasants] regard the mosque and temple as equal,
 Seeing no difference between muddy puddles and the ocean.
 They know not the sacred, honourable or the respectable,
 They are unaware of the sharia, the millat, or Islam.⁵⁹

This poem depicts the pathetic condition of Islam in Kashmir during the period of *Dogra* rule. There is a clear indication of infiltration of some Hindu religious elements into Kashmiri Muslims' belief and practice system. Hence, the *Dogra* regime not only oppressed the Muslim subjects of Jammu and Kashmir, but also suppressed and corrupted their Muslim faith and practice by imposing the legal system that disadvantaged the Muslim population of Jammu and Kashmir. Under the Kashmiri law, cow-slaughter was strictly prohibited and anybody who was found guilty of cow-slaughter would be imprisoned for up to ten years,

⁵⁸ Chandra, "The National Questions in Kashmir," 39.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Zutshi, *Language of Belonging*, 152. Also see Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir* (Srinagar: Kesar, 1967), 287; G.M.D. Sufi, *Kashir: Being a History of Kashmir*, Vol. II (Lahore: University of the Punjab, 1949), 19.

whereas goat-slaughter was allowed only on specific days of the year.⁶⁰ Conversion from one religion to another was not legally prohibited, but the person who changed his/her religion would forfeit one's ancestral property – on the whole this law punished Muslims, because Hindus did not practice proselytization.⁶¹ In addition, the regime's other activities, like use of some mosques and religious buildings for official purposes, further confirmed that the Dogra rulers disregarded the religious symbols of the Muslim subjects. In such socio-political environment what else, except Islamic religious ideologies, could provide courage and inspiration to the downtrodden Muslim people of Kashmir to resist this powerful oppressive regime?

III.4.2. Theological Discourse during the *Dogra* Period

Islam did not enter into Kashmir as a conquering power as was the case with most of other regions of South Asia; instead, Islam was brought in by Sufi saints in the fourteenth century.⁶² The mass movement of Kashmiri people to Islam was not a forced one. Islamic and historical conditions, in view of M. I. Khan, “suggest a peaceful conversion in contrast to the previous scholarly focus on Brahman resistance to Islam.”⁶³ Therefore, the vast majority of the Kashmiri Muslims venerate Sufi saints and their shrines. Nevertheless, the Kashmiri Muslims were divided into: *Sayyids*, who claimed themselves as the direct descendents of the Prophet; Moguls, originally migrated from central Asia; Sheikhs, descendents of local Hindu converts

⁶⁰ Ian Copland, “Islam and Political Mobilization in Kashmir, 1931-34,” in *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 54, No.2 (Summer, 1981), 234; see Lord Birdwood, “Kashmir,” in *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944), Vol. 28, No. 3 (July., 1952), 300.

⁶¹ Copland, “Islam and Political Mobilization in Kashmir,” 234.

⁶² Sumit Ganguly, “The Islamic Dimensions of the Kashmir Insurgency,” in *Pakistan Nationalism without a Nation?*, edited by Christopher Jaffrelot, Reprint (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2004), 182.

⁶³ Ashis Saxena, “A Review of the Valley of Kashmir – the Making and Unmaking of a Composite Culture?,” edited by Aparna Rao, in *Asia Journal of Global Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2010), 104.

to Islam; and *Pathans*, the descendents of the Afghans.⁶⁴ Besides, they belonged to different Islamic sects – Sunni, *Shia* and *Ahmadiyya* sects – Sunni Muslims were the dominant majority. Hence, the Muslim community of Jammu and Kashmir was not a homogeneous one; at the same time, veneration of saints and their shrines was very important part of Kashmiri Islam. According to Ishaq Khan:

Kashmiri Muslims' devotion to the shrines of the Sufis and the Rishis is deep-rooted in the local context rather than Islam alone. It is not just the famous shrine of Hazratbal or that of the most prominent Sufis like Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani, Shaikh Nuru'd-Din Rishi, Sahikh Hmza Makhdum, etc. That attract a multitude of Muslim devotees on the eve of urs but also innumerable shrines of the known or unknown Sufis that form objects of their veneration.⁶⁵

Later on this religious practice of the Kashmiri Muslims was sternly denounced as un-Islamic practice by those Muslim leaders who came under the influence of radical Islamic religious ideologies propagated by puritanical theologians, like Yahya Shah and his followers. Yahya Shah and his followers called the managers of the Sufi shrines, their *Khadims* (administrators) and their followers, *mushriks* (polytheists or idolaters – the ones who assign partners to Allah), therefore they were against the unity of God (*tawhid*),⁶⁶ one of the two central dogmas of Islam. The two central dogmas of Islam are God's Unity and Mohammad's prophetic mission. These fundamental principles of faith are put together as, "There is no god but God; Muhammad is the Apostle of God."⁶⁷

Consequently, from the late nineteenth century competing Muslim religious leaders began to assert their authority over the same city shrines with the focus of influencing the people to

⁶⁴ Zutshi, *Language of Belonging*, 11.

⁶⁵ Mohammad Ishaq Khan, "The Rishi Tradition and the Construction of Kashmiriyat," in *Lived Islam in South Asia: Adaptation, Accommodation & Conflict*, edited by Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2004), 63.

⁶⁶ Zutshi, *Language of Belonging*, 133.

⁶⁷ L. Bevan Jones, *The People of the Mosque*, seventh edition (Delhi: ISPCK, 1998), 83.

accept their theological ideologies. Such competing claims gave rise to intra-community conflict and infused a consciousness of community identity among Muslims of the Kashmir valley. The dispute was mainly on the definition of Kashmiri Islam; therefore, it was theological issue which included all Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir and their belief and practices. One group of Muslim leaders were favouring and defending the saint or shrine worship and the role of *pirs* (Sufi saints) in the life of the Kashmiris. The other group denounced the practice of saint worship as an un-Islamic and sacrilegious act, and they called their opponents sacrilegious saint-worshippers (*mushriks*) and defilers of Islam; in other words, this group called the Kashmiri Muslims back to the *Quran* and the teachings of Muhammad. The first group accused the second group for attacking the traditional religion of Kashmiri Muslims through preaching *Wahhabi* doctrine that was imported from Hindustan (India). *Wahhabism* was first propounded by Muhammad ibn Abd-ul-Wahhab (1703-1791) in Arabian Peninsula. According to Wahhab, Islam was corrupted and made weak by later dilutions and addition; therefore, he asked all Muslims to return to original simplicities of Islam.⁶⁸ His aim was to re-establish the golden age of the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate companions. Within a short time Wahhab's teaching and example influenced the Indian Muslims profoundly.⁶⁹

Regarding the dispute between the above stated two groups (the group that defended the saint worship and the group that denounced the saint worship) Zutshi writes, "by framing the dispute in terms of religious ideology, the contenders were attempting to define and appropriate the Kashmiri Muslim collectivity itself."⁷⁰ Moreover, the dispute made it apparent that radical

⁶⁸ Jansen, *Militant Islam*, 92.

⁶⁹ Jones, *The People of the Mosque*, 191.

⁷⁰ Zutshi, *Language of Belonging*, 132.

Islamic theological ideologies of Wahhab, *Ahl-i-Hadith* (people of the Traditions – which was originally known as *Fara’idi*, *Wahhabi* sect in India) and *Dar-ul Uloom* (“House of Knowledge” – also known as *Deobandi*) School of Deoband, in North India, began to infiltrate into Kashmir valley from late 19th century and slowly but steadily started the process of mobilization of Kashmiri Muslims. These schools of Islamic theology sought to purify Islam by ridding it of the Sufi tradition which was believed to be un-Islamic and corrupting product of British colonialism and Hindu influence. They emphasized the importance of *Taqlid* (tradition or “acceptance of the old interpretations”) and denounced the concept of *ijtihad* (re-interpretation of Islam according to time).⁷¹ According to the orthodox Muslims,

in Islam a perfect law has been given, even to the details of religious, social and political life [...] and since all first principles are contained in the Qur’an and the *sunna*, what does not coincide with them must be wrong.⁷²

Hence, the Islamic theological undertaking, in conjunction with the socio-political factors, could have played a very significant role in causing the Muslim riots in 1931.

III.4.3. Muslim Uprising in Jammu and Kashmir in 1931

Two occurrences – which might not sound so serious to non-Muslims – had instigated Muslim riots in Jammu and Kashmir in 1931. These were an insult of the *Quran* by a Hindu constable and discovery of some pages of the *Quran* in a drain in Srinagar.⁷³ During the unrest the Muslim crowd and the police clashed outside the Srinagar central jail and several people in the crowd were killed due to the police firing on them. Following this incidence there was general rioting during which many shops and homes of Hindu *Pandits*, money

⁷¹ “Kashmiri Separatists: Origins, Competing Ideologies, and Prospect for the Resolution of the Conflict,” Wikileaks Document Release, CRS-12: available from <http://wikileaks.org/wiki/CRS-RL32587>; Internet accessed: 2 February 2009.

⁷² Jones, *The People of the Mosque*, 75.

⁷³ Zutshi, *Language of Belonging*, 212.

lenders and minor government officials in the city were destroyed by Muslim mobs.⁷⁴ The Muslim revolt of 1931 changed the religio-political map of Kashmir for ever. One of the most significant outcomes of the uprising was the formation of the Muslim Conference which clamoured for agrarian reform,⁷⁵ because most of the cultivable land belonged to landlords who would give their land to the Muslim farmers on lease. Hence, the farmers who tilled the land every year remained poor and ragged, because a good portion of the produce of the land would go to the landlords and another portion would go to the government (as tax). Even the farmers who owned land would hardly be able to feed their family because of heavy land taxation. At the same time most of the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir were farmers, who totally depended upon the production of the land. So, the Muslim farmers were totally at the mercy of the landlords and the Hindu government. Therefore, it was necessary to bring land reform to liberate the Muslim farmers from the control of landlords as well as the government. The agrarian reform was people centred project – I will further discuss this in the later section.

In relation to the cause of uprising the contemporary observers were divided. Some British and the *Dogra* government officials held that it was the work of external forces like Bolshevik agents. According to E.M. Jenkins, the then Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, the cause of the problem was the economic condition of the Muslim people.⁷⁶ But, the economic condition of the Muslim peasants of Jammu and Kashmir had never been better throughout the *Dogra* rule, therefore, the economic situation could not be the main cause of the insurgence. Copland on the other hand associates the uprising to three factors: first, “the

⁷⁴ Zutshi, *Language of Belonging*, 212.

⁷⁵ Birdwood, “Kashmir,” 301.

⁷⁶ Copland, “Islam and Political Mobilization in Kashmir,” 233.

example of [the] civil disobedience movement in British India” infused courage to resist the suppressive authority; second, the death of *Mirwaiz*, the hereditary spiritual leader of the Muslims of Srinagar in 1931, which deprived the Palace of a close Muslim friend and an influential Muslim leader who was instrumental in putting in check the more radical Muslims; and third, “the emergence, in the late 1920s, of an embryonic Muslim political class able and willing to carry the torch for their co-religionists.”⁷⁷ Among the three factors the second one sounds more reasonable because the radical Islamic religious ideologies of Wahhab, *Ahl-i-Hadith* and *Dar-ul Uloom* already began to spread gradually in Kashmir in late nineteenth century and gain followers among the Kashmiri Muslims. In the struggle against the oppressive Hindu government and the sectarian teachings the concept of *jihad* (here it may mean both spiritual and physical struggle) might have boosted the moral of many Muslims who came under the influence of the puritanical theology.

There had been radical Islamic theological undercurrents at work from the time, as mentioned above, in the Kashmir valley. This religious force could have gradually inculcated among the Muslims in the valley a strong sense of community identity and spiritual passion and inspiration to protect the sacred religious symbols of Islam. Meanwhile, the Hindu police constable who was accused of insulting the *Quran*⁷⁸ represented, on the one hand, the oppressive *Dogra* regime and, on the other, the minority Hindu community which had been supporting the regime from the very beginning. Hence, both the parties the constable stood for were anti-Muslim and oppressive forces. At the same time, the insult of the *Quran* was anti-Islamic and anti-divine act for which the wrongdoer had to be punished severely for the sinful deed, but the government by dismissing the charges against the constable proved that it was

⁷⁷ Copland, “Islam and Political Mobilization in Kashmir,” 235.

⁷⁸ Zutshi, *Language of Belonging*, 211.

also a party in the sinful act. Besides, the *Quran* is not just a religious text or symbol for the Muslims, but it is the revelation and eternal Word of God. Therefore, the insult of the *Quran* enraged the Muslims of the Kashmir valley and they rose up against the government and its supporters.⁷⁹ At the same time, other grievances – economic and political – added more fuel in the uprising. The rebellion had widened the community cleavage between the Hindus and Muslims and this chasm had turned into deep-seated communal antagonism and mistrust, which resurfaced sporadically in the form of communal violence in post-independent Indian Jammu and Kashmir. Meanwhile, the post-independent Indian state policies against the Kashmiri people seemed to have further intensified this antagonism and mistrust against the Indian state and the dominant Hindu majority.

III.5. Post-1947 Jammu and Kashmir: Betrayals and Broken Promises

After a century of ill-treatment the Muslim population of Jammu and Kashmir entered into a new era in 1947. Unfortunately the transition was not a favourable development for the Kashmiri people, because the new age dawned with the partition of Kashmir and war between India and Pakistan – about a third of the Kashmir was absorbed into Pakistan and the two thirds became Indian Kashmir. So, since 1947 the Indian Kashmir has been bone of contention between Pakistan and India. The two nations have already fought three declared and one undeclared wars – out of the three declared wars one was fought over East Pakistan, present Bangladesh. From the time the Indian subcontinent was partitioned the Kashmir issue became an international concern and the United Nations Organisation (UNO) was involved with the search for a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir issue from the very beginning; however, the Kashmir issue remains unresolved till today due to the prevailing disagreements between the two nuclear powered nations.

⁷⁹ See Zutshi, *Language of Belonging*, 211f.

Thus, some scholars, like Tremblay, trace the roots of the Kashmir militancy to the Treaty of Accession signed by Hari Singh, the Maharajah of Jammu and Kashmir, on 26th October, 1947.⁸⁰ The Hindu Maharajah of the dominantly Muslim majority state was hesitant to join India in the beginning, but when he was unable to defend Kashmir from the invading Pakistani tribesmen he, having no other choice, was compelled to sign the Instrument of Accession to get the Indian military support to drive away the invaders. Alastair Lamb, in his book *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy*, questions the legitimacy of the Instrument of Accession.⁸¹ According to him the Treaty was not signed by the Maharajah on 26th October 1947, a day before the Indian troops landed in the Kashmir valley; therefore, he argues, the accession of Kashmir to India was the result of a plot hatched between the leaders of the Indian Congress, the Kashmir government and senior military officers (including British).⁸² Although the claim of Lamb sounds like the argument postulated in favour of Pakistan there is a considerable amount of truth in it, because the Treaty was an agreement hastily arranged between the leaders in the Indian government and the Maharajah, and it was implemented without being endorsed by the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Thus, after ten decades of cruelty and oppression the Treaty was the final betrayal connived by the Hindu *Dogra* regime, on its death bed, against the Muslim people of Kashmir. This last act of deception of the regime left the land of Kashmir divided between the two rival nations and, at the same time, it gave birth to a permanent dispute that has been a serious threat to the whole of Southeast Asia. Besides, the Kashmiri people were tossed from one Hindu rule into another Hindu-dominated secular rule – under both the governments, as per the theological proposition of the

⁸⁰ Tremblay, “Kashmir’s Secessionist Movement Resurfaces,” 926.

⁸¹ Alastair Lamb, *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy, 1884 -1990* (Hertsfordbury: Roxford Books, 1994).

⁸² Tremblay, Review: “Kashmir Conflict: Secessionist Movement, Mobilization and Political Institutions,” 571.

radical (fanatical) Islamic theologians like Jamal al Din al-Afghani and ‘Abd al-Qadir, Islam is in danger – according to Abd al-Qadir, the leader of a jihad against the French, “the Muslims must not submit to unbelieving rulers, and that Muslims who helped them and served as their accomplices themselves became unbelievers.”⁸³ The present Kashmir problems (i.e. the division of Kashmir between the two hostile nations and the Islamic militancy/terrorism in Kashmir) would not have occurred if the Maharajah would have taken concrete steps to gain the confidence of the Muslim majority of his Kingdom after the incidence in 1931, and would have sought the people’s approval before the partition of Indian subcontinent in 1947, to decide whether to join India or Pakistan or remain independent.

However, although the Treaty of Accession was signed by the Maharajah without the consent of the Kashmiri people Lord Mountbatten, the Governor-General of India, assured the people of Kashmir through the Maharajah that the question of accession would be placed before the people of Kashmir after the liberation of the land from the invaders. Likewise, Nehru at once

confirmed this conditional acceptance and, in a detail statement to the Constituent Assembly of India, reasserted the ultimate right of the people of Kashmir, under the supervision of an impartial international tribunal such as the U.N., to decide their future political association.⁸⁴

Meanwhile, both India and Pakistan, as per the report of the U.N. Security Council in 1948, agreed that “the fate of the country should be finally decided by a free expression of will of the people.”⁸⁵ These assertions and agreement assured the Kashmiri people that, soon their natural right, the right of being the sons of the soil, to decide their own fate would be given back to them. So, the people waited with high hope for the time they would exercise their

⁸³Bin Taymiyyas, *Muslims Under Non-Muslim Rule*, texts translated by Yahya Michot (London: Interface Publications, 2006), xiii.

⁸⁴ Tremblay, “Kashmir’s Secessionist Movement Resurfaces,” 928.

⁸⁵ Josef Korbel, “The Kashmir Dispute and the United Nations,” in *International Organization*, Vol. 3, No.2. (May, 1949), 279.

right of self-determination, but the day never dawned for them. So, once again the Kashmiri people were betrayed – this time by the Hindu dominated secular administration.

However, the Indian Constitution accorded a “special status” to Kashmir granting it considerable autonomy within the federal system of India and, at the same time, the central government sanctioned a substantial amount of financial aid towards the economic development of the state. Nevertheless, both the constitutional and the economic provisions were granted with the intention of total integration of the state of Jammu and Kashmir within India without holding any plebiscite. According to Kohli, this strategy of the Indian government did the “Trick” from 1950 to 1980, because during this period ethnic nationalism in Kashmir remained mild even though the memories of subjugation, betrayal and injustice against them were kept alive and, in the mean time, there were international problems over the Kashmir issue.⁸⁶

III.5.1. Why There was no Insurgency before 1988?

Since the ground was conducive for the people of Kashmir to rise up against the Indian state from early 1960s to early 1980s, why did the insurgency not erupt in this period? There were two noteworthy factors that played a key role in preventing any armed movement in Jammu and Kashmir till the early 1980s. One of those factors had been the leadership of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah. He was “a master political strategist”⁸⁷ and “‘founding father’ and much revered leader”⁸⁸ in Kashmir. He was rightly called the *sher-i-Kashmir* (“Lion of Kashmir”) because he fought and suffered bravely for the rights of the Kashmiri people.

⁸⁶ Kohli, “Can Democracies Accommodate Ethnic Nationalism?,” 339.

⁸⁷ Zutshi, *Language of Belonging*, 227.

⁸⁸ Kohli, “Can Democracies Accommodate Ethnic Nationalism?,” 339.

Abdullah was not only a political leader, but he was also a devout Muslim – in 1931 Mirwaiz Kashmir (the hereditary religious leader of the Muslims in Srinagar) was so impressed by Abdullah's religious zeal, that he permitted Abdullah to make *Jamia Masjid* as the organizational centre for his political activities.⁸⁹ Besides, from the very beginning of his political career he used Islamic concept of social and political rights which was the concept of a unified Muslim community.⁹⁰ Hence, he had been able to balance both spiritual and political as “two sides of a same coin in Islam” throughout his life.

Moreover, right after he held the responsibility of administration of Jammu and Kashmir Abdullah took two bold decisions to ameliorate the economic condition of the downtrodden people of Jammu and Kashmir. In 1950 his government passed two very important pieces of legislation: “the Abolition of Big Landed Estates Act and the Distressed Debtors Relief Act.”⁹¹ The first Act seized all cultivable land of more than twenty-three acres and distributed it to the landless peasants, and the remaining land was made state property. The second piece of legislation formed a board that instituted guiding principles for the debt relief.⁹² These timely and poor people oriented actions of his government though alienated big landholders made him the most popular and respected leader among the Kashmiri mass.

Further, he stood tall among all the Kashmiri leaders due to his constant determination to achieve socio-economic and political liberation for Kashmiri people. Because of such determination the Indian government was not able to persuade him to change his views over the right of self-determination of the Kashmiris. Abdullah disregarded all the tactics of

⁸⁹ Zutshi, *Language of Belonging*, 228.

⁹⁰ Zutshi, *Language of Belonging*, 231.

⁹¹ Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir*, 30.

⁹² Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir*, 30.

persuasion by the authorities in the Indian government to give up the idea of self-determination, and such defiance left the Indian leaders with no other choice but to detain him for an indefinite period.⁹³ Hence, in 1953 he was deposed from the post of Prime Minister of Kashmir and kept under house arrest for over fourteen years; however, even the dismissal and detention could not break his will power.

Abdullah was able to channel his influence upon the people of Kashmir even though he was incarcerated. Nevertheless, he was against following the path of violence to achieve the political goal. The main reason behind this viewpoint was that he and his associates were deeply influenced by Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence and the effectiveness of passive resistance in the struggle against the British government in India,⁹⁴ and that influence continued. Abdullah's standpoint was recognized by the Indian leaders at the time the state government was troubled by communal violence between Hindus and Muslims. In 1967 communal violence broke out in Srinagar and seriously undermined the law and order in the city. The Kashmir government was forced to put the city under curfew, ban the publication of the newspapers and close down all colleges in the city. Yet the situation continued to be very tense and unpredictable. At this critical juncture the Central government authorities acknowledged that Abdullah was the only person who "possessed the stature and influence to revive the political moderation and communal harmony in the state."⁹⁵ Therefore, the Central government, in spite of strong opposition from some quarters, released him in the beginning of January 1968. The recognition of the weight of his leadership by the Indian government

⁹³ David E. Lockwood, "Sheikh Abdullah and the Politics of Kashmir," in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 9, No. 5. (May, 1969), 384.

⁹⁴ Lockwood, "Sheikh Abdullah and the Politics of Kashmir," 382.

⁹⁵ Lockwood, "Sheikh Abdullah and the Politics of Kashmir," 391-392.

during such crucial time makes it obvious that he played a highly influential role in averting any armed movement in the state, and Abdullah continued to uphold the above stated standpoint till he breathed his last.

Abdullah remained the revered leader and “the Lion of Kashmir” till the end of his life although in the latter days of his life his administration was accused of financial irresponsibility and exploitation of his authority to increase the wealth of his family.⁹⁶ He died in 1982, and with him also died the hope of a peaceful solution of the long-standing Kashmir issue.

The second factor, which was instrumental in prevention of armed movement before 1980s, was the economic and educational development in Jammu and Kashmir. Due to central government’s financial aid there was rapid economic and educational development during 1960s and 1970s. The Kashmiri people, who very recently had shed the load of slavery, in all probability, did not want to miss any economic and educational opportunities for their and their children’s’ future welfare. In the 1960s the majority of the people were first generation Kashmiris who had undergone the experience of slavery, therefore, for them more important and urgent needs were economic prosperity and the opportunity for their children’s education; whereas, political issues like self-determination bore less weight compared to these urgent necessities. Thus, the Central government’s strategy, as mentioned earlier, did the “Trick”, because the government was able to divert the Kashmiri people’s attention towards economic and educational opportunities.

⁹⁶ Sten Widmalm, “The Rise and Fall of Democracy in Jammu and Kashmir,” in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 37, No. 11 (Nov., 1997), 1009.

Therefore, the Islamic theological undercurrent, which had been at work since the pre-independence period, could not mobilize the religious constituency in Kashmir towards the creation of an Islamic insurgency till early 1980s. During this period (i.e., before the early 1980s) there were several aggressive and militant Muslim groups working secretly and, who were willing to apply force to achieve their goal; among those groups the *Awami Action Committee*, led by Mirwaiz Farooq, the 24 year old spiritual leader of the *Jama Masjid* (mosque) in Srinagar, was “more openly militant and pro-Pakistan in its political outlook.”⁹⁷ Since the ground for the mobilization of Kashmiri Muslims to take up arms in the name of Islam was not yet ready these aggressive and militant groups could not inspire armed rebellion in Kashmir. Only from the late 1970s, due to the success of the Islamic resurgence in Iran and the engagement of Taleban fighters against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan, the moral of those radical Islamic theologians (who favoured armed struggle against the so-called infidels in India) was boosted.

III.5.2. Islamic Religious Ideologies in the Rise of Terrorism in Kashmir

Bin Taymiyya, one of the radical Islamic theologians, divided the world into *dar al-Islam* (the land/house of Islam) and *dar al-kufra/dar al-harb* (the land of unbelief or house of war).⁹⁸ The first one is the domain in which governing principle is the Islamic law (*sharia*) based on the Quran and the Traditions (*Sunna*) of the Prophet; the second one is the realm which is governed by non-Islamic law. Haji Shari’at Allah of Bahadurpur, who was a Wahhabi (a follower of Wahhab’s theological ideology) and the founder of Fara’idi sect in Faridpur district in East Bengal in 1804, declared India “the house of war,” because India was ruled by

⁹⁷ Lockwood, “Sheikh Abdullah and the Politics of Kashmir,” 387.

⁹⁸ See Bin Taymiyyas, *Muslims Under Non-Muslim Rule*, 123.

non-Muslim government⁹⁹ and, for this reason, India was not suitable place for the Muslims to live. This radical theological teaching of Wahhab motivated the Indian Muslims to denounce the educational system of the British government after the defeat of *Sepoy* Mutiny in 1857. According to the orthodox Muslim religious leaders (*maulawis*) the British educational system was “the pathway to certain apostasy designed to destroy their young ones.”¹⁰⁰ So, those Muslims who sent their children to government or Christian Mission schools were considered as infidels by the orthodox Muslim leaders and their followers.

From late 19th century, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the radical theological ideologies of Wahhab, *Ahl-i-Hadith* and *Dar-ul Uloom* School of Deoband began to make deep inroads into the Muslim society of Kashmir through the preaching of radical Muslims who opposed the practice of Sufi Islamic tradition in Kashmir. Since then, the radical ideologies of these schools had been gradually expanding their domain in the Kashmir valley. After the independence of India the radical Muslims of Kashmir got full freedom, due to the freedom of religion granted by the Indian Constitution, to preach and teach those radical ideologies to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. In 1940s *Jamaat-i-Islami* of Jammu and Kashmir (JIJK) came into existence with two objectives – to purify Kashmiri Islam and establish an Islamic state. The ideological framework of this Islamic organization does not differ from other branches of the *Jama'at* elsewhere. The Ideology of the JIJK is based on the writings of the founder, Maulana Sayyed 'Ala Maududi (1903-1979), of the *Jama'at*. According to Maududi, Islam is an absolute ideology and way of life that covers all areas of a Muslim's individual and

⁹⁹ Jones, *The People of the Mosque*, 191.

¹⁰⁰ Jones, *The People of the Mosque*, 194.

collective existence.¹⁰¹ To impose Islam in its totality it requires all Muslims to struggle for the establishment of an Islamic state or states that is/are governed by Islamic principle. Democracy is an un-Islamic political system because it stands in opposition to the Islamic understanding of God as the ultimate authority and maker of law. Likewise, secularism is to be condemned, because it separates religion and politics. The JIJK had been committed to fulfil this understanding of Maududi by all means. According to this understanding every Muslim of Kashmir must fight for the liberation of Kashmir from India for the purpose of the establishment of Islamic state.

Further, the growth of Islamic educational institutions could have assisted in inculcating these Islamic theological ideologies in the mind of Kashmiri youths from their young days; therefore, the second and the following generations of Kashmiri youths, born after 1947, were more likely to be radicalised with these theologies. Hence, in late 1980s many of the Kashmiri youths were educationally advanced; theologically radicalized; politically deprived; and better updated of the happenings around the globe. So, this radicalized Islamic religious constituency was like a time bomb ticking for the appointed moment to explode. Meanwhile, the success of the Islamic movement in Iran, a worldwide Islamic revival and the rise of Taleban force and its success against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan added more inspiration and determination to fight against the supposed infidels, the Indian government and its supporters, to attain the given religio-political goal of the Kashmiri people.

Furthermore, the political and communal elements which occurred in the 1980s, after the death of Abdullah, worked together as detonating device and set off the time bomb in 1988. The political and communal elements were the Hindu appeasing tactics applied by Indira and

¹⁰¹ Yoginder Sikand, "The Emergence and Development of the Jama'at of Jammu and Kashmir (1940s-1990)," in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (July, 2002), 707.

Rajiv when their popularity began to wane, dismissal of Farooq Abdullah's government in 1984 because he aligned with other non-congress heads of the states,¹⁰² communal and political activities of the *Sangh Parivar* and its threat to Non-Hindus, particularly Kashmiri Muslims, in India because the *Sangh Parivar* vies to do away with the Article 370 (the Article which grants special status to Jammu and Kashmir) of the Indian Constitution, betrayal of Kashmiri people by Farooq and his party by making alliance with the Congress for the 1987 election and, finally, the rigging of the 1987 election denying election victory to several of the Muslim United Front candidates.¹⁰³ The rigging of the 1987 election was the last straw that broke the camel's back; because, in this election the Muslim religious constituency was betrayed and humiliated by applying unfair means. Most noteworthy aspect in this incident was the involvement of the National Conference party in the betrayal, which could be understood as apostasy or a denial of the Islamic faith. These events of 1980s were not isolated ones but, they were very much interconnected with the anti-Muslim and suppressive forces of the past, discussed earlier in this chapter. All these events sent out very strong signal to the people of Kashmir in general and to religiously radicalized Kashmiri youths in particular that Indian government was anti-Kashmiri and anti-Muslim, therefore, India was not the house of Islam but the house of struggle or war. So, 1988 was the right time for them to start their armed struggle to achieve their goal.

III.6. Islamic Terrorist Groups: *Lashkar-e-Toiba* and Its Ideology

Among the Islamic terrorist groups in Kashmir the most prominent ones are JKLF (found in Britain in 1977), HuM (militant wing of JJK, most probably found in 1987), *Muttahida Jihad Council* (United *Jihad Council*, started in Muzaffarabad, in Pakistani Kashmir, in 1990),

¹⁰² Kohli, "Can Democracies Accommodate Ethnic Nationalism?," 340.

¹⁰³ Kohli, "Can Democracies Accommodate Ethnic Nationalism?," 340.

Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT - The Army of the Pure), *Jaish-e-Mohammad* (Army of the Prophet Mohammad – started in 2000), and *Harkat-ul Mujahideen* (earlier known as Harkat-ul Ansar – began its terrorists activities in 1995).¹⁰⁴ *Harkat-ul Ansar* was the first Kashmiri terrorist group to be listed in the U.S. Department of state’s list of the groups that sponsor terrorism in 1997; then, the group changed its name to *Harkat-ul Mujahideen*. Among these terrorist groups JKLF is considered as secular or nominally secular by Ganguly and Tremblay. The other three are more radical Islamic terrorist groups. Among these the most dreaded and brutal one is the *Lashkar-e-Toiba*.

Lashkar is the militant arm of *Markaz Dawa-ul-Irshad* (the Centre for Preaching), an Islamic religious organization of the Pakistani Punjabis.¹⁰⁵ This militant group was established in the late 1980s to train young Pakistani Muslims to fight against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. After the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan ended the terrorist organization diverted its attention to other parts of the world. *Lashkar* terrorists are given training in Pakistani camps. They receive two stages of training – basic and intensive. Basic is short course which lasts for 21 days and the intensive training is three-month rigorous training course. In the training the trainees are taught the tactics of guerrilla warfare, use of modern arms and ammunitions, endurance and survival, and aeroplane hijacking. As the militants of LeT are well trained and highly religiously inspired, they are extremely efficient in their modus operandi to engage their conceived enemies on the enemies’ own territory. *Lashkar* militant recruits come from different parts of the world. Further, the *Lashkar* militants are known for their brutality,

¹⁰⁴ See “Kashmiri Separatists: Origins, Competing Ideologies, and Prospect for the Resolution of the Conflict,” CRS 17-22.

¹⁰⁵ Alexander Evans, “The Kashmir Insurgency: As Bad as It Gets,” in *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Spring, 2000), 71 [Article online]; available from <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713636778>; Internet accessed: 1 September 2010.

because they treat their victims with inhuman cruelty – they behead or eviscerate their captives.¹⁰⁶ This terrorist organization seems to have some link with the Al-Qaeda, because its political wing, *Markaz*, received contribution from Osama Bin Laden in 1987 for its building project.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, besides Kashmir, this movement is involved in terrorist activities in other Muslim dominated regions of the world like Chechnya; therefore, it recruits more militants mainly from Pakistan and the Middle East.

The LeT infiltrated into Kashmir in January 1990; since then it has been carrying out its terrorist activities in Kashmir and other parts of India. Meanwhile, the organization claims that it can strike any-place in India. Some of the most daring terrorist acts of the *Lashkar* militants in India were: the attacks against the symbolically crucial Red Fort (in 2000) and the attack on the Indian Parliament (on 13 December 2001), the most vital organ of Indian state, in the heart of the capital of India, Delhi.¹⁰⁸ The attack on the Indian Parliament almost dragged India and Pakistan into full-scale war. The LeT, in the early 2002, had declared that it had sent 14,369 Indian soldiers to hell (*wasl-e jahannam*), whereas about 1,200 rebels had “drunk the cup of martyrdom (*jam-e shahadat nush karna*).”¹⁰⁹

The ideology of the *Markaz* and the *Lashkar* is derived from the radical theological teachings of *Ahl-e Hadith* and Deobandi School. The group’s main objectives are, to purify Kashmiri

¹⁰⁶ “Lashkar-e-Taiba: A Background,” in AAPRA INDIA (Dec. 27, 2000); available from <http://www.Subcontinent.com/terrorism20001227a.html>; Internet accessed: 10 September 2010.

¹⁰⁷ See “Lashkar-e-Taiba: A Background,” in SAPRA INDIA (Dec. 27, 2000); available from <http://www.subcontinent.com/sapra/terrorism/terrorism 200001227a.html>; Internet accessed: 10 September 2010.

¹⁰⁸ Mariam Abou Zahab, “‘I Sahll be Waiting for You at the Door of Paradise’: The Pakistani Martyrs of the Lashkar-e Taiba (Army of the Pure),” in *Practice of War: Production, Reproduction and Communication of Armed Violence*, edited by Aparna Rao, Michael Bolling and Monika Bock (Berghahn Books, 2007), 138.

¹⁰⁹ Zahab, “‘I Sahll be Waiting for You at the Door of Paradise’: The Pakistani Martyrs of the Lashkar-e Taiba (Army of the Pure),” 137.

Islam and establish pan-Islamic state under a *Caliphate* (Spiritual leader of all Muslims). In this regard Kashmir is looked at as the single element of struggle toward the creation of pan-Islamic state in the entire Indian subcontinent.¹¹⁰ Therefore, the objectives of the *Lashkar* are much broader than the objectives of other Islamic terrorist groups in Kashmir. LeT, in the view of Abou Zahab,

Promotes transnational activities in the name of jihad against infidels in the world where Muslims are perceived to be oppressed, aims at creating a new deterritorialized identity (i.e., the *ummah*) based on its understanding of Islam. It rejects all cultural particularities, as they are perceived as dividing Muslims and having a negative influence on ritual practice.¹¹¹

The above-given reasons make it plain that the terrorist activity of the group is not restricted to the territory of Jammu and Kashmir alone.

II.7. Towards a Solution

There are many suggestions towards the solution of the Kashmir problem. Among the suggested solutions there seems to be a common understanding among the scholars, who studied the Kashmir problem, that some kind of regional autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir might be helpful towards the resolution of the problem.¹¹² Granting of limited regional autonomy to the state might not be right solution to the deep rooted antagonism and mistrust. The most important factor towards the solution of the problem is to gain the trust of the Kashmiri people in the Indian administration. In this regard the best possible solution is the re-implementation of the special status granted to the state in the Indian constitution. The Central governments, from the beginning, never honoured the special status granted to the state by the constitution. According to the provision of the Constitution Indian state could

¹¹⁰ Kashmiri Separatists: Origins, Competing Ideologies, and Prospect for the Resolution of the Conflict,” CRS 17-22.

¹¹¹ Zahab, “I Shall be Waiting for You at the Door of Paradise,” 152.

¹¹² Tremblay, “Review: Kashmir Conflict,” 576.

only have jurisdiction over defence, foreign affairs and communications of the state. The constitutional provision gives Kashmir a separate constitution, flag, penal code and criminal procedure code; therefore, the state of Kashmir, as per the constitutional provision, is different from the other states of India. But, these constitutional provisions were gradually eroded due to the policy of the total integration employed by the Congress governments. If the constitutional provision is once again honoured and the original status of Kashmir is restored the people of Kashmir might gradually begin to trust and cooperate with the Indian government. At the same time, non-interference in the state politics by Indian political leaders may help to establish better centre-state relationship: better and sustainable centre-state relationship seems to be imperative in search of peaceful solution of Kashmir problem.

Furthermore, the Indian government has to work out plans and projects for the regular interaction and cooperation among different religious communities of the state. In this regard government might have to take a strong measure to restrict any outside communal element that might attempt to create communal tension in the state. Besides, the violence of human right by the Indian military forces needs to be strictly checked and any report of past or present violence has to be thoroughly investigated. The Indian government has to be considerate in several areas to win the trust of the people and to let them get rid of the deep seated socio-historical, political and religious antagonism.

III.8. Outline of the Contributions in this Chapter

1. The root of the present Kashmir problem stretches back to the *Dogra* period. The following four issues had been very significant in the birth of the crisis in Kashmir.

1.1. The *Dogra* regime was unquestionably communal because it adopted the policies – religious, socio-economic and political – that favoured Hindus against the Muslim subjects

though Muslims were the dominant majority in Kashmir. The communal policies of the regime deprived the Muslim majority of their – educational, political, economic and religious – rights and privileges. Hence, **the regime demarcated a clear cut religious boundary line between the Hindu subjects and the Muslim subjects and sowed the seeds of religious antagonism between the Muslims and the Hindus.**

1.2. During the *Dogra* period **the Muslim community was facing a serious religio-cultural identity crisis both from within and from outside** the Muslim society – this religio-cultural identity crisis was expressed in poems by several poets like Maqbool Shah to awaken the Muslims from their ignorance and spiritual slumber. The Kashmiri Muslim community was not homogeneous one, but it was divided into different sects and groups and lacked unity; at the same time the racist, casteist and communal *Dogra* regime did its best to deprive them of their rights and privileges and degraded the Kashmiri Muslims to the lowest rung of the Kashmiri society. So, lack of unity within the community and the oppressive rule, which was from outside the Muslim community, pushed them to chaotic and defenceless – both religiously and politically – state. In such hopeless situation only religion, as seen in Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, could provide succour and inner courage.

1.3. **The Dogra rulers did not take any measure to stop the infiltration of puritanical Islamic theological ideologies** from the British India into Kashmir. Therefore, the radical Islamic theological ideologies slowly but steadily began to gain adherents in the Kashmir valley from the late 19th century. The radical religious leaders/preachers constantly propagated the theological ideologies of Wahhab and *Dar-ul Uloom* of Deoband to awaken Muslims of the Valley towards their Islamic faith and obligations. These religious leaders/preachers, to a considerable extent, succeeded in awakening the Muslims of the

Kashmir valley from late 1920s. The result of that awakening was the Muslim uprising of 1931.

1.4. The boundary line which was demarcated by the Hindu rulers between the Hindus and the Muslims was further strengthened with the infiltration and propagation of the puritanical theological ideologies in Kashmir. Hence, from early 1930s it became explicit that the Kashmiri society was deeply divided in communal line; meanwhile the Muslim community nurtured deep seated antagonism against Hindus due to more than eight decades of the oppressive Hindu rule.

2. The Muslim uprising in the Kashmir valley in 1931 was the outburst of this deep seated antagonism. Though there were economic, educational and political factors involved in the uprising **radical Islamic religious ideology, that could justify violence against so-called enemies of Muslim community on the basis of socio-economic-religious-political experiences undergone by the community, was the most important inner driving force.** This uprising was the turning point in the history of Kashmiri Muslims mainly for four reasons: first, the incidence demonstrated that the Muslims of Kashmir were awakening, both spiritually and politically; second, sacred symbols of Islam had played very powerful role in mobilization of the constituency against injustice; third, the wall of separation between Hindus and Muslims became visible; fourth, the incidence infused courage and hope among the Muslims of wider circle, and worked as a perfect example for future Muslim unity in Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore, this incidence was the most important focal point for latter socio-religious and political developments in Jammu and Kashmir.

3. The last Hindu *Dogra* ruler not only oppressed the Kashmiri Muslims, but also betrayed them in 1947 by signing the Instrument of Accession without the people's consent.

The last act of the *Dogra* regime worked like a powerful blow to the Kashmiri society which caused a never healing wound. It was a double betrayal, for the Kashmir and Kashmiris were divided between two hostile nations, and the people of Indian occupied Kashmir were handed over to another Hindu dominated Indian secular government by the Hindu regime that oppressed them almost a century. This betrayal added more fuel to Muslim religious antagonism against the Hindus. Therefore, for the Kashmiri Muslims Hindus always represented anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic force.

4. The Kashmiri Muslim society was again betrayed in the post-independent India by Hindu dominated secular government. Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, who happened to be Kashmiri *Pandit*, betrayed the Kashmiris by disregarding the promise he and the Viceroy of India made to the people at the time of accession of Kashmir to India. Nehru's government, instead of fulfilling the promise, began to implement the policies for the total integration of the state of Jammu and Kashmir within the Indian union. If the people of Kashmir were given a chance to exercise their right, as promised by Nehru in the beginning, the present situation might not have come into existence.

5. The leadership capability of Mohammad Abdullah and the economic and educational development in the state restrained armed uprising before 1988. Though the religious antagonism had been very much alive and the radical Islamic religious ideology was regularly at work through Islamic educational institutions (*madrassas*) the first generation Kashmiri people had high hope of their problem being solved through peaceful political means. In the meantime the leadership of Abdullah assured them that this was going to happen in near future.

6. **The second generation Kashmiris, those who were born after 1947, were more radicalized** due to the rapid educational (both religious and secular) developments that took place from early 1960s. Hence, in 1980s many young people of the second and the following generations could be easily mobilized in the name of Islam. Moreover, “Islam in danger” slogan had been regularly raised from 1931 onward, because the Kashmiri Muslim community had been constantly at struggle for their faith and socio-political dignity from the time of *Dogra* rule. At the same time, **in Islam sacred and secular cannot be separated from one another. So, the concept of *jihad* (here this means both spiritual and socio-political struggle), though it was not openly applied before, was very much practical and part of the life of the Kashmiri people.**

7. **The hope of peaceful solution of the Kashmir problem died down with the death of Abdullah.** In the meantime there began to take place unfair political and religio-political developments from early 1980s. Farooq, the son of Abdullah, was unable to fill the leadership vacuum created by the death of his father; however, the first few years the people tried to keep their hope alive with the expectation that he would work for the solution of the Kashmir problem. But this hope was shattered when Farooq and his party joined hands with the Congress party, the party which betrayed the people of Kashmir several times, for electoral gain. This was a severe blow to the remaining hope of the people of Kashmir for the peaceful solution of the Kashmir problem. Finally, **the result was the eruption of socio-religio-political frustration, anger and hopelessness, that continued to built-up from the time of *Dogra* period, in unprecedented violent form, i.e. Islamic religious terrorism.**

III.9. Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated that the historical experiences, political issues from the time of the Indian independence and the radical Islamic religious ideologies – particularly the radical religious ideologies propagated by Wahhab, *Ahl-e-Hadith* and Deobandi School – were responsible for the birth of the Islamic religious terrorism in Kashmir. However, the political developments in the 1980s – after the death of Abdullah, communalism and communal politics, misappropriation of power by the Central government authority against the religious constituency in Kashmir, and denial of the democratic rights of the Kashmiri people by rigging election in 1987 detonated the terrorist blast in Kashmir.

This case study offers the following contributions: Islam plays essential role in the life of the Kashmiri Muslim community; in the Kashmiri Islamic society sacred (which includes shrines of *pirs*) and secular are very closely interrelated; the land of Kashmir has special significance in both religious and secular life of the people; the puritanical Islamic theological ideologies have been (since the early twentieth century) expanding their support base in the Kashmir Valley; from the early 1930s Islam has been providing inner courage, determination and passion to the people to rise up against the forces of injustice; the socio-religious antagonism (among the Kashmiri Muslims) against the Hindu religious community budded from the *Dogra* period; the Hindu communal activities against the Muslims (which will be evaluated in the following chapter) and religious and political developments from the late 1970s strengthened the Islamic extremist elements within the Kashmiri community. The aforementioned points offer better knowledge of the importance of religion (Islam) in instigation and mobilization of religious terrorism in Kashmir in the late 1980s.

CHAPTER IV

HINDU RELIGIOUS TERRORISM

IV.1. Introduction

Incidence of religious violence against minority communities, particularly Muslims and Christians, has increased in figure and intensity in several Hindu dominated regions (like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Orissa and Bihar) in India from the early 1980s.¹ Owing to the acts of religious extremism/terrorism, thousands of Muslims, Christians and Sikhs were killed, wounded, and made homeless or forcefully converted into Hinduism. Meanwhile, religious violence against the ethno-religious minorities seems to be gradually spreading to all over India due to hate-minority propaganda of Hindu militant organisations like the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) and the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP). Moreover, what makes Hindu religious terror more complicated and horrifying is an involvement of saintly characters like *Swamis* (spiritual leaders/masters) *Sadhus* (holy-men) and *Sadhvis* (holy-women) – some of them were arrested in relation to the bomb blast cases at Mecca Masjid (Mosque) in Hyderabad (2007) and in Malegaon, in Maharashtra (2006 and 2008).² Involvement of, so-called, holy people in the acts of extreme form of religious

¹ See “2002 Gujarat Violence;” available from http://www.bookrags.com/wiki/2002_Gujarat_violence; Internet accessed: 19 February 2011; “Violence against Christians in Orissa, India,” Turn back to God (October 23, 2008); available from <http://turnbacktogod.com/violence-against-christians-in-orissa-india>; Internet accessed: 19 February 2011.

² “Hindu Holy Man Aseemanand in Custody Over India Blasts,” available from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12180193>, Internet accessed: 21 April 2011; “Swami Aseemanand’s Confession Reveals Hindutva Terror Activities,” available from <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article1073223.ece>, Internet accessed: 21 April 2011; “Malegaon Blasts: Murder Charges on Sadhvi, 2 Others,” available from <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/malegaon-blasts-murder-charges-on-sadhvi/2377519/>, Internet accessed: 21 April 2011; “Mecca Masjid Blast: Apology, Compensation sought for Innocent Youths,” available from <http://www.twocircles.net/node/235668>; “Swami Asimananda Alias Jatin Chatterji Master mind of Macca Masjid Blast Arrested. Are there Hindu Terrorists?,” <http://www.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20101119193644AAg1ccg>; “Judicial Remand of Sadhvi Pragma Extended till Nov 29,” available from <http://www.zeenews.com/nation/2008-11-17/484246news.html>, Internet accessed: 19 February 2011; Main Accused in Mecca Masjid Ajmer Blasts was Killed in 2007,” in Rediff.com (June 24, 2010); available from <http://news.rediff.com/report/2010/jun/24/sunil-joshi-was-behind-hyde-ajmer-blast-says-cbi.htm>; Internet accessed: 19 February 2011.

violence underscores that Hindu religious terrorism is not a force to be underestimated; rather, it could be more dangerous than Sikh and Islamic terrorism, because Hindus constitute the large majority³ of the total population of India.⁴ There are only five states and one union territory in which Sikh, Muslim and Christian communities are in majority. However, the entire population of the minority dominated states is far less than the population of any one of the several Hindu dominated states. So, even the minority communities of the minority dominated states might not remain unaffected in the near future if the trend of Hindu religious terror against the minority communities continues.

Nevertheless, scholars have not taken into account seriously Hindu religious violence as Sikh and Islamic religious terrorism so far. Asgar Ali Engineer, Kathinka Froystad, Steven Wilkinson, Ashutosh Varshney, Atul Kohli, Ashis Nandy and host of others tend to consider violent activities of Hindu militant organizations as communal riots/violence. Such perception only suggests that the forces of Hindu religious terrorism are either underestimated or not taken for real. At the same time, mostly economic and socio-political factors are being accounted for the production of religious violence or communal riots in India. Therefore, in this chapter I will make an attempt to critically assess why Hindu religious extremist organizations have been involved (since 1980s) in violent activities against the members of minority religious communities. Furthermore, I will examine how certain Hindu religious texts and symbols are manipulated to mobilize Hindu religious constituency for the acts of Hindu religious terrorism. In the meantime, a critical study will be done to explain how

³ See Amrita Basu, "Reflections on Community Conflicts and the State in India," in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (May, 1997), 395.

⁴ Government of India, "Census and You – Religion," Office of the Registrar General & census Commissioner (New Delhi); available from http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/religion.aspx; Internet accessed: 19 April 2011.

religion and other aspects, particularly historical and socio-political contexts, have been interrelated in inspiring Hindu religious extremism.

The arrangement of this chapter is made in the following manner. Firstly, a review of some scholars' arguments concerning the rise of religious/communal violence/riots/conflicts in India will be presented; then, my viewpoint on the rise of Hindu religious terrorism will be proposed. Secondly, I will critically analyse the nineteenth century Hindu socio-religious reformation movements, specifically the *Brahma Samaj* and the *Arya Samaj*. It is imperative to make critical examination of these modern reformation movements to understand the historical background of the present Hindu militant movements. This will be followed by an evaluation of early twentieth century Hindu religio-nationalistic organizations, specifically the Hindu *Mahasabha* and the RSS. The main objective is to underline on what ground these Hindu movements came into existence and to what extent they are responsible for the motivation of Hindu religious extremism/terrorism. Thirdly, activities of the *Sangh Parivar* (the VHP, the RSS and their affiliates) will be assessed to describe how the militant Hindu organizations are involved in terrorist activities. Finally, an assessment on the Hindu religious terrorism and conclusion will be offered.

IV.2. Scholars' Arguments

According to the observation of Engineer, Froystad, Wilkinson, Gyanendra Pandey, Partha Chatterjee, Romila Thapar, Varshney, Kohli, Nandy, T. N. Madan, Shikha Trivedy, Sahil Mayaram, Achyut Yagnik and host of others religious violence in India occur due to socio-economic and political factors. Elites of the Hindu or other conflicting communities, in the view of these intellectuals, manipulate religion for their own economic or political advancement; hence, leaders of any of the given communities might use religion to fuel

communal conflict or violence to fulfil their aspirations. Thus, religion is considered as a mask that is managed to hide the actual socio-political purpose of the political actors. Some of these intellectuals' viewpoints in relation to the cause of violent activities of Hindu religious extremism are critically analysed under the following sections.

IV.2.1. Political and Economic Dimension – Erosion of Political Order and Authority

Political Scientists (such as Zoya Hasan, Engineer, Froystad, Wilkinson, Varshney and Kohli), applying comparative approach, take into an account explicitly political and economic dimension to explain the communal or religious violence in India.⁵ In the view of Hasan economical and political interests “play a vigorous part in fomenting communal conflict in India.”⁶ Engineer claims that: “the communal phenomenon is political in genesis;” and communal problems occur when elites of a particular religious community skilfully manipulate “the religious sentiments and cultural ethos” of the people of the given community with the aim of realising their (the elites’) “political and cultural aspirations by identifying these aspirations as those of the entire community.”⁷ “Those politicians who claim to be most patriotic,” says Engineer, mastermind most of the riots to gain political power “by propagating hate politics against minority communities.”⁸ Froystad opines that communal riots/violence in India, in spite of their ruthlessness, are a short-lived category of political violence than any other form of violence, such as religious war or terror.⁹ Wilkinson argues

⁵ Basu, “Reflections on Community Conflicts,” 391.

⁶ Zoya Khaliq Hasan, “Communalism and Communal Violence in India,” in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (February, 1982), 25f.

⁷ Asghar Ali Engineer, “The Causes of Communal Riots in the Post-partition Period in India,” in *Communal Riots in Post-independence India*, edited by Asghar Ali Engineer (1991), 34.

⁸ Asghar Ali Engineer, “Communal Riots, 2003,” in *Economic and Political Weekly* (3 January, 2004), 21.

⁹ Kathinka Froystad, “Communal Riots in India as a Transitory Form of Political Violence: Three Approaches,” in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 32, Issue 3 (2009), 442-459.

that ethnic or communal riots are planned for political purposes by politicians. “Political competition,” he says, “can lead to peace as well as violence.”¹⁰ According to Varshney, the Congress Party, key political institution of India, had undergone “a profound organizational decay, with no centrist parties taking its place” in the 1980s.¹¹ Since the mid-1960s, Kohli contends, India’s governing – which includes development and accommodation of diverse interests – capability has weakened significantly. The decline of the competence to govern eroded the order and authority “to deal with the pressing problems of law and order, corruption, and poverty.”¹² These political problems, asserts Kohli, have often given rise to violence. Mainly, emphasizes Kohli, Congress Party under the leadership of Mrs. Gandhi and her son, Rajiv, were responsible for the present political predicament.

Political and economic matters, no doubt, could cause conflicts/violence to certain extent among the different sections of the Indian society; but it is seriously questionable that whether political and economic interests are mostly responsible for Hindu religious extremism/terrorism that seems to have an intention to do away with the given religious minorities and establish India as a Hindu *rashtra*. Meanwhile, it is true that from the latter half of the 1960s there began to develop adverse political conditions owing to the disintegration of major political institutions, particularly the Congress Party. On account of the undesirable political developments the Indian state, on several instances, failed to safeguard the constitutional rights and provide safety and security to the minorities from the

¹⁰ Steven I. Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1; on theory of political decay see L. P. Singh, “Political Development or Political Decay in India,” in *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Spring, 1991), 66f.

¹¹ Ashutosh Varshney, “Contested Meanings: India’s National Identity, Hindu Nationalism and the Politics of Anxiety,” in *Daedalus*, Vol. 122, No. 3 (Summer, 1993), 227.

¹² Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent: India’s Growing Crisis of Governability*, reprint (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 5.

attack of majority religious community. These political developments could have further emboldened the Hindu religious extremist-elements that had been at work since the latter half of the nineteenth century to achieve certain religio-political goals. However, the political activities in the 1960s and in the following decades might not be the main factors for inspiring Hindu religious terrorism against the given religious minorities because, Hindu religious and socio-political antagonism against the minority, specifically Muslim, Christian and Sikh, communities appears to have taken root long before. In the meantime, the above-given explanations do not clarify why only particular ethno-religious (Muslims and Christians) minority communities are targeted by Hindu extremists. So, political and economic factors cannot satisfactorily explain the cause/causes of Hindu religious violence/terrorism against the particular religious minorities.

IV.2.2. Communal Violence is caused by Western Ideas

Scholars, like Ashis Nandy and T.N.Madan, construe communal violence as a reaction to, or denunciation of Western ideas, such as secularism,¹³ democracy, westernization, modernization, etc. Nandy opines that secularism and mass democracy are responsible for communal or political violence in India, because secularism and mass democracy upset the system of social relationship of the Indian society.¹⁴ According Shikha Trivedy, Sahil Mayaram and Achyut Yagnik (including Nandy) Hindu communal movements (like *Ramjanmabhumi*) and communal violence take place due to the disintegration of traditional social and cultural ties that bind together all religious sections of Indian society, due to large

¹³ See A. Nandy, "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance," in *Mirrors of Violence, Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia*, edited by V. Das (Delhi: 1990), 69ff; T. N. Madan, "Secularism in Its Place," in *Politics in India*, edited by S. Kaviraj (New Delhi: 1997), 342ff.

¹⁴ See Nandy, "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance."

measure of modernization and Westernization being undergone by Indian nation.¹⁵ They further argue that due to high degree of modernization and Westernization there emerged modern mass oriented version of religion which became both a political ideology and an identity for sections of urbanites that lost many of their traditional principles and beliefs and, at the same time, lacked a strong hold in modernity and its related benefits. These intellectuals hold the Colonial rule responsible for the communal problems in India because, the Colonial government was responsible for introducing a Western concept of nation state and national self-determination that totally differed from the Indian traditions in managing community relations and differences. Romila Thapar, Gyanendra Pandey and Partha Chatterjee claim that the contemporary problem of communalism and communal violence is “inlaid within the emergence of colonial modernity in South Asia.”¹⁶ Likewise, Madan and Saberwal consider that communal violence is generated by the modern political system, because the modern political system, they assert, is unable to accommodate the traditional and religious norms that deeply govern the Indian society.¹⁷

The above-stated views sound like the critics of Colonial rule, secularism and modernity. Moreover, these observations only tend to explain why communal violence takes place in India, but they don't specifically shed light on why and on what basis Hindu extremists are motivated to kill or terrorise members of the particular minority communities. Furthermore, the views have the tendency to generalize all religious violence in India as communal or ethno-cultural conflicts. But, some religious violence, such as the Gujarat pogrom and

¹⁵ See Ashis Nandy, Shikha Trivedy, Shail Mayaram and Achyut Yagnik, *Creating a Nationality: The Ramjanmabhumi Movement and Fear of the Self* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹⁶ Chandana Mathur, “Communalism and Globalization: An Opening Gambit in a Conversation between Two Literatures,” in *Communalism and Globalization in South Asia and Diaspora*, edited by Deana Heath and Chandana Mathur (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 4.

¹⁷ S. Saberwal, “On the Diversity of Ruling Traditions,” in *Politics in India*; Madan, “Secularism in Its Place.”

violence against Christians in Orissa differ from other communal violence to a large extent – rather these violent incidents display characteristics of religious terrorism. Thus, the modern concept of secularism and modernity – although is responsible for the emergence of communalism and communal violence to certain extent – do not adequately define the actual cause of Hindu religious terror against the particular religious minorities.

IV.2.3. Religious Violence: By-product of Globalisation

Scholars, like Patel, Heuze and Masselos, think that due to globalisation communal violence occur in India. According to them, globalisation and economic liberalisation cause social displacement and disarray of the Indian society, and give rise to increasing number of communal violence and communal or ethno-religious identity politics.¹⁸ Globalization, says Marika Vicziany, is not only an economic affair. The most obvious

evidence for globalization in India today is to be found in foreign funding to a virulently right wing Hindu nationalism that has gripped the country in last ten years. The consequences of *Hindutva* (Hindu Nationalism) campaign were seen in the state of Gujarat that suffered from mass anti-Muslim killings in 2002.¹⁹

Arjun Appadurai associates communalism with globalisation. Global process or globalization, he argues, is accountable for production of social uncertainty, and the social uncertainty can steer a project of ethnic cleansing.²⁰ In the view of A. Ahmad, Hindu or “*Hindutva* terror – its exclusory rhetoric of national unity, its hegemonic grip on popular culture, and its

¹⁸ S. Patel, “Contemporary Bombay, the Power Base and Popular Appeal of the Shivsena,” in NCSAS Discussion Paper, No. 3 (1997); G. Heuze, “Cultural Populism: The Appeal of the Shiv Sena,” in *Bombay, Metaphor of Modern India*, edited by S. Patel and A. Thorner (Bombay: 1995), 213ff; J. Masselos, “The Bombay Riots of 1993: The Politics of an urban Conflagration,” in *Politics of Violence*, edited by Howard Brasted, John McGuire and Peter Reeves (New Delhi: 1996), 111ff.

¹⁹ Marika Vicziany, “Globalization and Hindutva: India’s Experience with Global Economic and Political Integration,” *Globalization in the Asian Region: Impacts and Consequences*, edited by Gloria Davies and Chris Nyland (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2004), 92.

²⁰ Mathur, “Communalism and Globalization: An Opening Gambit in a Conversation between Two Literatures,” 4 & 5.

representations of Indian Muslims as menacing” – is inseparable from the neoliberal globalization that has mostly benefited upper and middle class Hindus in India.²¹ Riaz Ahmed, in his article “Gujarat Violence: Meaning and Implications,” wrote that the Gujarat violence took place due to the total political and economic crisis sweeping through the Indian political system. This political crisis, Ahmed observes, was both the cause and the outcome “of the process of globalisation, authoritarianism and communalism.” “Globalisation,” as he understands, “has not merely opened up new economic avenues; it has also made the economic crisis worse.”²²

Globalization (ref. Appendix 5 for explanation on globalisation and its effects) can pose a serious threat to the traditional cultures and socio-historical set-up by spreading Western culture and imagery and as a new form of colonialism, cultural colonialism, which is “more insidious and more effective in cementing the dependency of the post-colonial periphery than the fiscal crudities of earlier decades,” through “late modernity, cultural flow and information technology.”²³ Hans Opschoor says, “Globalisation and modernisation may pose threats to ethnic and religious diversity and thus also to social cohesion and stability.”²⁴ However, the argument focused on globalisation, in explaining Hindu religious/communal violence, does not explicate why Hindu extremists should mostly target Muslims, Christians and Sikhs. Do Muslims, Christians and Sikhs present a serious socio-religious threat to the dominant Hindu

²¹ A. Ahmad, *On Communalism and Globalization: Offensives of the Far Right* (Gurgaon: Three Essays Collective, 2003), 121.

²² Riaz Ahmed, “Gujarat Violence: Meaning and Implications,” in *Economic and Political Weekly* (18 May, 2002), 1871.

²³ Peter Golding and Phil Harris, eds., *Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Globalization, Communication and the New International Order* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 4.

²⁴ Thomas Pogge, “Recognized and Violated by International Law: The Human Rights of the Global Poor,” in *Religion, International Relations and Development Cooperation*, edited by Berma Klein Goldewijk (Wageningen: Wageningen Academic Publishers, 2007), 88.

majority? Why the dominant majority becomes overwhelmingly violent, in any pretext, against the given minorities? Why Hindu spiritual leaders and saintly characters are involved in Hindu terror tactics? The argument fails to answer these questions appropriately.

IV.2.4. Hindu Religious Ideologies, Historical Context and Socio-Political Environment are Accountable for the Emergence of Hindu Religious Extremism/Terrorism

All the above-discussed postulates tend to explain the reason why there are increasing incidents of communal or ethno-religio-political violence in India; but, they do not specifically define Hindu religious terrorism (like Sikh and Islamic terrorism) and what could be the cause of the emergence of this force. No doubt, Hindu-Muslim communal violence (which began to occur from the latter half of the nineteenth century) is one of the most complicated and persistent problems in India. The first significant chain of local Hindu-Moslem communal riots/violence had taken place in “Bombay and the United Provinces in the 1870s; others have occurred in one or more parts of India in every succeeding decade.”²⁵ One of the most important issues (although there were numerous immediate issues) for the occurrence of Hindu-Muslim communal riots during the latter nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries was the question of cow-slaughter.²⁶

Although communal violence began to take place before Indian independence, the partition of India has given birth to longstanding religious violence on communal lines. In certain cases communal violence appear to be visible symptoms of a more serious problem (i.e. Hindu religious terrorism) the root of which could be traced back to the nineteenth century Hindu

²⁵ Daniel Thorner, “Hindu-Moslem Conflict in India,” in *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol. 17, No. 7 (7 April, 1948), 78. In the second decade of the twentieth century there began the Gurdwara Reform Movement in Punjab, and during the period of this movement hundreds of Sikhs were killed and thousands were injured or jailed. This was both religious as well as political movement. See Louis E. Fenech, *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition : Playing the Game of Love* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 227.

²⁶ Thorner, “Hindu-Moslem Conflict in India,” 78.

socio-religious movements. This problem is becoming a chronic malady that seems to be spreading all over India without restraint and looks like resisting all kinds of treatment. Besides bomb blast cases, two of the most gruesome acts of religious terror perpetrated by Hindu extremist organizations were brutal religious violence against Muslims in Gujarat in 2002 and against Christians in Orissa in 2007-08. There are certain factors (will be analysed critically in later sections) that make it evident that the Gujarat and Orissa violence were different from other communal riots. These two violent incidents rather demonstrate certain features of holy war.

Therefore, in the discourse of Hindu religious terrorism political, economic and social factors do not sufficiently explain the origin and design of Hindu religious terrorism. It appears that there are mainly three deeply interlinked aspects involved in motivating Hindu religious terrorism. They are radical Hindu religious ideologies, historical context and prevailing socio-political environment. In the meantime, attempts have been made (by some Hindu thinkers) to reconstruct Indian (rather Hindu) history to exhibit the past glory and superiority (compared to all other cultures and races) of the Hindu culture and society, and to prove the demonic nature of the conceived enemies.²⁷ One of the primary intentions behind the attempt of reconstruction of Hindu history seems to be the projection of these forces of evil as a grave threat to the survival of Hindu dharma and Hindu society; therefore, acts of religious terrorism could be justified as righteous deeds. In the RSS branches cadres are handed down “simple messages of Hindu glory, tales of resistance to Muslim tyranny.”²⁸ They are also told that the struggle against the Muslim tyranny, for Hindu independence, is a thousand-year-old-struggle

²⁷ See Sumit Ganguly, “The Crisis of Indian Secularism,” in *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (October, 2003), 21.

²⁸ Tapan Raychaudhuri, “Shadows of the Swastika: Historical Perspectives on the Politics of Hindu Communalism,” in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (May, 2000), 265-66.

Hence, religious ideologies, formulated on the basis of select Hindu texts (particularly the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*) and symbols (cow protection, liberation and purification of holy land or *poonya bhumi*, liberation and construction of *Ramjanmabhoomi* temple and other holy places, re-establishment of *Ramrajya*, chariot procession or *rath yatra*, etc.), conceived and reconstructed historical and socio-political contexts could appropriately elucidate the emergence of Hindu religious terrorism. To understand how these factors are closely interlinked in giving rise to Hindu religious terror, we have to critically review some of the modern Hindu socio-religious reformation movements that began in early nineteenth century and how they were instrumental in formation of twentieth century militant Hindu religious-nationalist organizations and how they succeeded in infusing militant Hindu ideologies among many Hindus.

IV.3. Modern Hindu Socio-Religious Reformation Movements

From the early nineteenth century there began modern Hindu socio-religious reformation movements in India. Basically these Hindu socio-religious movements characterized “a reaction to the threat of Western domination and especially to a twofold cultural challenge, the utilitarian reformism and Christian proselytism.”²⁹ Activities of both the parties might have appeared very dangerous to the prevalent socio-cultural balance of the Hindu society.

The main objectives of these socio-religious movements were: to defend Hinduism from outside attacks, particularly from Christian missionaries;³⁰ to wean Hinduism from various

²⁹ Christophe Jaffrelot, “Hindu nationalism, Strategic Syncretism in Ideology Building,” Paper prepared for presentation at the Conference of the British Association for South Asian Studies, (Birmingham: 10-12 April, 1992), 2.

³⁰ See Yogendra K. Malik and Dhirdendra K. Vajpeyi, “The Rise of Hindu Militancy: India’s Secular Democracy at Risk,” in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (March, 1989), 314.

socio-religious and customary behaviours³¹ – e.g., *sati* (burning of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre – for explanation on *sati* see Appendix 6),³² idol worship, child marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage, infanticide, and caste system; to unite all Hindus of India; to awaken (educationally, religiously and socio-politically) Hindus to liberate India from colonial domination; and, “to create a purified future in which Hindus would regain,” as conceived by certain Hindu religious thinkers, “their lost honor, their dignity, and their role as spiritual leaders in the world.”³³ According to Zavos, in the nineteenth century Hindu thinkers, interested in social and political matters, postulated a set of ideas that have become prominent in the formation of modern Hindu identities. Mainly, he says, concepts of the ‘Golden Age’ of Vedic Hinduism, the Aryan race as the fundamental force that produced Hindu culture, “the slow disintegration and eventual stagnation of that culture during the medieval period, and the related notions of forced conversion to Islam and destruction of Hindu temples as the defining events of that particular period.” These notions have “contributed a great deal to analyses of the predicament of India both as a subjugated land and as a force in the development of the modern world; as a Hindu in this context.”³⁴

Hence, these movements could be accredited for militant Hindu religio-nationalistic awakenings from the second half of the nineteenth century. Among the modern Hindu socio-religious movements the *Brahmo Samaj* and the *Arya Samaj* are the most prominent ones.

³¹ James Warner Bjorkman, *Fundamentalism, Revivalists and Violence in South Asia* (Riverdale: The Riverdale Company, 1988), 40. Also see Maurice Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda: The Ancient Religion of India*, (London: Adamant Media Corporation, 2005), 10.

³² See Paul B. Courtright, “The Iconographies of Sati,” in *Sati, the Blessing and the Curse: The Burning of Wives in India*, edited by John Stratton Hawley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 50.

³³ Bjorkman, *Fundamentalism, Revivalists and Violence*, 40; John Zavos, *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2.

³⁴ Zavos, *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India*, 2.

IV.3.1. The *Brahmo Samaj*: Towards Assertion of Hinduism as Universal Religion

The *Brahmo Samaj* (Society of Ultimate Reality or Brahman) was the first important Hindu socio-religious reform movement. The *Samaj* was formally founded in 1828, in Calcutta (now Kolkata), by Rammohan Roy (1774-1833).³⁵ Later on the *Samaj* came to be known as *Adi Brahmo Samaj*. Roy's aims were to dissociate his countrymen from the evils of *Puranic*³⁶ Hinduism³⁷ (ref. Appendix 7 for explanation on *Puranas* and *Puranic* Hinduism) and draw their attention to the original purity of the teaching of Vedanta (Upanishads are called Vedanta), to defend Hinduism from outside attacks, particularly from Christian missionaries, and to ascertain it as a universal religion. Christian missionaries mainly attacked the practice of idolatry, polytheism and caste system. Roy considered that only the Vedanta (Upanishads) and the Vedanta-Sutra as authoritative Hindu religious texts. Further, he was convinced that Vedanta taught, similar to Christian and Islamic texts, monotheism. Therefore, the idolatry, polytheism and sacrifices, according to Roy, had to be avoided from Hinduism; consequently, he sought to reform Hinduism from within to project it as a universal faith. Roy strongly advocated monotheism and, at the same time, he fervently argued that idol worship was later addition to "a most perfect antiquarian religion in which God was worshipped as a pure Absolute."³⁸ Thus, the form of devotion adopted by the *Brahmo Samaj* was prayer to the "One Absolute Reality or Brahman."

³⁵ Zavos, *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India*, 44; E.G. Parrinder, *What World Religions Teach*, 2nd edition, reprint (London; Harrap & Co. LTD, 1977), 34; Kenneth W. Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 30f.

³⁶ See "Hinduism," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica 2008 Ultimate Reference Suite* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2008).

³⁷ See "Hinduism," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica 2008 Ultimate Reference Suite*.

³⁸ Jaffrelot, "Hindu nationalism, Strategic Syncretism in Ideology Building," 3.

The *Brahmo Samaj* in pursuit of reforming Hinduism almost isolated itself from its mother religious institution. However, the *Brahmo Samaj* had wider influence all over India and emulating it several other religious reformation movements came into existence in different parts of India. The *Arya Samaj* was one of those Hindu reformation movements which generated lasting impact in the Hindu society till today. The *Arya Samaj* can be called the forerunner of latter militant Hindu religio-nationalistic organizations.

IV.3.2. The Arya Samaj: Re-establishment of the Vedic Golden Age

The *Arya Samaj* was founded in 1875³⁹ by Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883). In 1872, Dayananda went to Calcutta and met Keshab Chandra Sen and other *Brahmo Samajists* who had a great influence upon him. Although Dayananda disapproved certain practices of the *Samajists* he followed them in institutionalizing “the idea of a Vedic monotheism and joined in the criticism of the idolatry of popular Hinduism.”⁴⁰ The *Satyartha Prakash* (“Light of the Truth”), the work which Dayananda completed in 1875, expounds the fundamental principles of the Arya creed:

The belief in a single, unitary God, the identification of the Vedas as the embodiment of complete truth, and the logical inference that the age of Vedic religion constituted the Golden Age not only of Hinduism, but of all religion.⁴¹

As per the perception of Dayananda, his work was the re-introduction of the religious practices of the Vedic-Hinduism; therefore, whole Hindu population ought to practice them. This is why his watch word was “back to the Vedas,”⁴² in other words, all Hindus must return back to the original and unadulterated Hinduism to re-establish the Vedic-Golden-Age.

³⁹ Bjorkman, *Fundamentalism, Revivalists and Violence*, 46.

⁴⁰ Jaffrelot, “Hindu nationalism, Strategic Syncretism in Ideology Building,” 5.

⁴¹ Zavos, *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India*, 45.

⁴² See Lajpat Rai, *A History of the Arya Samaj* (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1976), 58.

The objectives of Dayananda on founding of the *Arya Samaj* were: to project Hinduism as superior religion, compared to all other religious traditions; to liberate and purify the holy land of Hindus; to protect Hindu religious symbols, especially cow; and to do away with Christian, Muslim and Sikh faiths from India. To realize these aspirations Dayananda introduced *Suddhi* (purification-ritual)⁴³(for further clarification on Suddhi see Appendix 8) and *Sangathana* (organization). *Suddhi* was introduced to fulfil two objectives: to reclaim those Hindus who were converted to Christianity, Islam and Sikhism; and, to give equal status to untouchables with other high caste Hindus by investing sacred thread on them. *Sangathana* was an organization for self-defence that would help to cultivate a militant spirit, manliness and self-respect (which had been lost, as supposed by Dayananda, under the Muslim domination) among the Hindus, so that the Hindus could meet the enemies (Muslims and Christians) in their strongholds. The *Sangathana* movement was widely popularized, in the early 1920s, by the Hindu religio-political organizations like the Hindu *Mahasabha* and the RSS “largely in response to expressions of Pan-Islamism and the growth of Muslim organizations during the Khilafat movement.”⁴⁴ In support of Sangathana initiatives, Urban merchants and notables of north India frequently made large financial donations or granted free land for the formation of gymnasiums and wrestling clubs or dens. Practice of *Suddhi* and *Sangathana* make it evident that Hindu socio-religious antagonism against the given minority communities began to germinate during this period. Furthermore, *Suddhi* and *Sangathana* systems erected a concrete barrier, between Hindus and Muslims-Christians-Sikhs, which was reinforced by latter developed militant Hindu religio-nationalistic ideologies.

⁴³ Zavos, *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India*, 91.

⁴⁴ Nandini Gooptu, “The Urban Poor and Militant Hinduism in Early Twentieth-Century Uttar Pradesh,” in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (October, 1997), 911.

So, the *Brahmo Samaj* and the *Arya Samaj* sounded an urgent wake up call to the Hindus to defend their socio-cultural and religious identity and their holy land. Two most significant issues they pointed out were degradation of Hinduism and a serious threat posed by Christianity and Islam to both Hindus and their sacred territory. Therefore, these movements, to a large extent, were instrumental in inspiring militant spirit among Hindus. During Twentieth-century, following these movements, there came into existence present militant Hindu religio-nationalistic organizations, among them the All India Hindu *Mahasabha*, the RSS and the VPH are the most prominent ones.

IV.3.3. Cow Protection Movement for Hindu Unity

The original cow protection movement could be dated back to the 1860s. However, from the 1890s the issue of cow protection began to occupy prominent public stage and became a powerful religious symbol of a broader Hindu religious nationalist agenda from 1920s.⁴⁵ During the 1880s, Dayananda travelled several parts of the country lecturing on the Hindu reformation and establishing cow protection societies (*Gaurakshini Sabhas*). He founded “his first gaushila (cattle sanctuary) in Rewari in 1879, a cow protection society was established in Agra by 1881, and another in Calcutta in 1882.”⁴⁶

The cow protection movement, as Pandey observes, has been very important issue to establish close connection between urban and rural, and elite and ordinary Hindus to develop mass Hindu communal consciousness.⁴⁷ This movement, Van der Veer argues, was neither

⁴⁵ O'Toole, “Secularizing the Sacred Cow,” 85.

⁴⁶ Therese O'Toole, “Secularizing the Sacred Cow: The Relationship between Religious Reform and Hindu Nationalism,” in *Hinduism in Public and Private: Reform, Hindutva, Gender, and Sampraday*, edited by Antony Copley (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 88.

⁴⁷ Gyandendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University press, 1990), 163.

religious or nor Hindu nationalist movement.⁴⁸ Whereas John Zavos opines that though cow protection was not like other socio-religious movements – because the approach for cow protection on the whole was non-confrontational – it was an important step towards the development of Hindu nationalistic ideology.⁴⁹ In the meantime, Katherine Prior suggests that the role of the cow as a symbol of Hinduness was strengthened by colonial involvement in the disputes related to cow protection in the early nineteenth century.⁵⁰ “Hinduness,” according Copley, is a radical Hindu identity which “excludes Indian Muslims, Sikhs, Parsees, Jains, Buddhists, Christians, Animists, and to a degree, the scheduled castes and tribals whose loyalties are, at most, but partially Hindu.”⁵¹

The cow protection movement has to be studied in relation with other Modern Hindu socio-religious movements, especially the *Arya Samaj* and its institutions of *Suddhi* and *Sangathana*, to comprehend the design in launching this movement. Cow has been the most important of all Hindu holy symbols from the Vedic period for both religious and socio-economic purposes – on the one hand, almost in every Hindu ritual and ceremony cow products, like milk, ghee (clarified butter) and cow dung, were/are essential and, on the other, oxen and bullock were/are needed to plough fields, pull bullock-carts etc. Moreover, cow (as a holy/sacred symbol) was the only most promising universal (among all the practicing Hindus) religious symbol that could be managed to cement problematic gap between different classes (high and low castes, urban and rural etc.) of Hindus. Thus, Dayananda could have,

⁴⁸ O'Toole, “Secularizing the Sacred Cow,” 84.

⁴⁹ Zavos, *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India*, 82.

⁵⁰ K. Prior, “Making History: The State’s Intervention in Urban Religious Disputes in the North Western Provinces in the Early Nineteenth Century,” in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 27, Issue No. 1 (Feb., 1993), 179ff; Zavos, *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India*, 82.

⁵¹ Antony Copley, “Introduction,” *Hinduism in Public and Private: Reform, Hindutva, Gender, and Sampraday*, edited by Antony Copley (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2.

keeping in view the religious significance of the cow to all religious Hindus, launched cow protection movement. At the same time, he might have other motives – to popularize his *Arya* movement among all Hindus, to seek Hindu unification,⁵² and to breed religious hatred among Hindus against Christians and Muslims (because Christians and Muslims slaughter cow and eat beef) – in launching the cow protection movement. Hence, the cow protection movement could have given birth to Hindu communalism and communal tension between Hindus and Muslims and Christians in several parts of British India from the early 1880s.⁵³

IV.4. Emergence of Militant Hindu Organisations during the early Twentieth Century

From the late nineteenth century socio-reformation movements, especially the *Arya Samaj*, had been attempting to unite and regenerate the Hindu community by promoting more militant form of Hinduism. From the 1920s, as a result of the activities of these socio-reformation movements, increasing number of Hindu zealots started to present themselves as the aggressive force of resurgent Hinduism,⁵⁴ and there emerged several militant Hindu religio-nationalist organizations. These militant organizations played very crucial role in widening relationship-gap between Hindu and minority communities. Muslims were visualized as oppressors who were responsible for the decline of Hinduism, supposedly on account of the detrimental effect of Muslim rule on the Hindus.⁵⁵ Among these militant organizations the Hindu *Mahasabha* and the RSS are the most important ones in the discourse of Hindu extremism. Therefore, it is necessary to review these movements briefly to assess

⁵² Zavos, *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India*, 91.

⁵³ See Zavos, *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India*, 83.

⁵⁴ Gooptu, “The Urban Poor and Militant Hinduism,” 880.

⁵⁵ Gooptu, “The Urban Poor and Militant Hinduism,” 880.

their significance in intensifying communal division between Hindu and minority communities.

IV.4.1. All India Hindu *Mahasabha* – a Religio-Political Platform for Hindu Unity

The All India Hindu *Mahasabha* was formally founded in April 1915, in Hardwar,⁵⁶ one of the most important Hindu sacred places in North India. The Punjab Hindu *Sabha* (Hindu Forum), which was developed between 1907 and 1909 by *Arya Samjists*, was the driving force in establishing the All India Hindu *Mahasabha*. The main purpose in formation of this organization was to create national level religio-political platform to bring together different Hindu religious movements to oppose British concessions to the Muslim League, which was founded in 1906 – in this year “a delegation of Muslims had applied to the British for separate electorates,” which “had led to fears that minorities might indulge in separatism.”⁵⁷ In other words, the intention of the concerned Hindu religious leaders in forming this kind of national level Hindu organization was to seek Hindu unity to mobilize masculine/aggressive form of Hinduism against Muslims and British government to achieve their religio-political goals – members of the caste-ridden Hindu society had been described as weak by the British.⁵⁸ In 1923, B.S. Moonje (leader of the Central Provinces Hindu Sabha), in his report on Malabar Hindu-Muslim riot, pointed out three main weaknesses of Hindus: (1) Hindu practice of “the un-Vedic principle of ahimsa” and vegetarian diet compared to Muslims’ virility, non-vegetarian diet and practice of sacrifice – he suggested reintroduction of “the Vedic institution of Yajñathag” (understood as animal sacrifice) to make Hindus familiar with the

⁵⁶ Richard Gordon, “The Hindu Mahasabha and the Indian National Congress, 1915 to 1926,” in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1975),

⁵⁷ Jaffrelot, “Hindu nationalism, Strategic Syncretism in Ideology Building,” 12.

⁵⁸ P.C. Bamford, *Histories of the non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movements*, New Delhi: KK Books, 1985), 111; see Jaffrelot, “Hindu nationalism, Strategic Syncretism in Ideology Building,” 14-17.

sight of spilling blood and killing; (2) lack of Hindu unity compared to the Muslims; and (3) Social disunity created by caste system.⁵⁹

Therefore, the *Mahasabha* campaigned for the Hindu character of India, encouraged the practice of *Suddhi* to reconvert those Hindus earlier converted to Islam and Christianity, strongly advocated the adoption of Hindi in *Devanagari* script as the national language of India, ardently campaigned for cow-protection and Hindu uplift. So, the organization sought to ascertain ageless correlation between Hinduism (includes Hindu race) and the land as conceived by certain Hindu religious thinkers, like Dayananda and Acharya Ramdev. At the same time, Vedic Golden Age (which is perceived as the glorious past of Hinduism), Sanskrit (sacred) and Hindi (prestigious) languages, and historical⁶⁰ and holy land have been visualized as the criteria of the identity of Hindu religio-nationalism. However, the idea of Vedic Golden Age has been replaced by *Ramrajya* (an ideal Kingdom of Rama) from the early 1980s.

Acharya Ramdev (1881-1939), an ardent Hindu nationalist, wrote *Bharatvars ka Itihas* (history of India) as a textbook for *Gurukul Kangri*, which was founded in 1902 near the holy city of Hardwar.⁶¹ In the book Ramdev makes an attempt to prove that Vedic civilization was

⁵⁹ Jaffrelot, "Hindu nationalism, Strategic Syncretism in Ideology Building," 12.

⁶⁰ Aijaz Ahmad, on the claim of Hindu communalists that India belongs to the Hindus from ancient time, writes: "The empires that Hindu communalist nostalgia so fondly recalled as its own past-and, by extension, as the real roots of 'national culture' – were not only the real, historical empires of the period prior to the Turko-Afghan invasions, nor just the Rajput or Maratha kingdoms of the early and late Mughal periods, but also the powerfully imagined and religiously believed empires of the mythic past. This pathological will to [sic] recoup a certain kind of virility by obliterating lines of demarcation between history and mythology." Aijaz Ahmad, "Fascism and National Culture: Reading Gramsci in the Days of Hindutva," in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 21, No. ¾ (March-April, 1993), 51.

⁶¹ Herald Fischer-Tini, "Inventing a National Past: The Case of Ramdev's *Bharatvars Ka Itihas* (1910-14)," in *Hinduism in Public and Private: Reform, Hindutva, Gender and Sampraday*, edited by Antony Copley (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 112.

chiefly responsible for the growth of the entire major “high cultures” of the world.⁶² He refutes the argument that whatever cultural progress the Hindus achieved is due to their contact with Babylonians, Greece and Romans. Citing some philological and archaeological evidence, he tries to prove that China, Persia, Afghanistan, Greece, Rome, Babylon, Egypt, America, and Celtic civilizations had drawn a lot from Aryans’ achievements.⁶³ Whether the arguments he states and the philological and archaeological evidences he postulates in the book could be historically and scientifically verified and validated or not present day Hindu nationalism draws a lot of inspiration from Ramdev’s reconstructed Hindu history.

Thus, the structure of the Hindu *Mahasabha* was erected on the fertile ground of Hindu communal-antagonism against Muslims. This was why after 1922 its growth depended on communal issues, i.e., its growth was “strongest where communal riots were fiercest.”⁶⁴ From 1920, the year in which *Khilafat* movement was launched in India, the parameter of the Hindu communal-antagonism against the Muslim community enhanced. In this regard Muslim religious leaders of that time could be accounted for adding fuel to the Hindu communal resentment against the Muslims, for three reasons: “the loose talk of a holy war and the manifestly Pan-Islamic aims of many *Khilafat* leaders led Hindus to fear a revived and aggressive Islam;” Muslim religious leaders openly exhorted Muslim mass to make efforts to convert non-Muslims; and the uprising of the Moplahs in Malabar (in August 1921), which was tactlessly covered-up by the Central *Khilafat* Committee.⁶⁵ According to Gaul Minault, “The Khilafat movement was primarily a campaign by a particular group of Indian Muslims

⁶²Fischer-Tini, “Inventing a National Past: The Case of Ramdev’s *Bharatvars Ka Itihas*,” 116.

⁶³Fischer-Tini, “Inventing a National Past: The Case of Ramdev’s *Bharatvars Ka Itihas*,” 116.

⁶⁴ Gordon, “The Hindu *Mahasabha* and the Indian National Congress,” 173.

⁶⁵ Gordon, “The Hindu *Mahasabha* and the Indian National Congress,” 162-63.

to unite their community politically by means of religious and cultural symbols meaningful to all strata of that community;" as a result, the movement was viewed as a quest for "Pan-Indian Islam".⁶⁶ The afore-mentioned Muslim activities confirmed the fear of Hindus that the hidden agenda of the *Khilafat* movement was to enlarge the domain of Islam. Consequently, Hindu-Muslim communal riots broke out in several places during 1922 and 1923. The *Mahasabha*, which remained formally non-functional from 1920, was revived in 1922 in reaction to the Hindu-Muslim communal violence. From this time the communal tension between the two communities heightened.⁶⁷ In the meantime, the relationship between the *Mahasabha* and the Indian National Congress (INC) began to strain because the INC conceived the emerging Indian nation a collection of all existing religious communities.⁶⁸ All communities, whether majority or minority, were regarded "more or less equal and the Hindu majority was expected to accept some sacrifices in the interest of national integration."⁶⁹ Whereas the goal of the *Mahasabha* was to make India Hindu nation, therefore, any concession to minority communities would not be acceptable to the leaders of the organization – the differentiation between the INC and the *Mahasabha* began to be clearly visible from 1937, the year in which Veer D. Savarkar became president of the *Mahasabha*.⁷⁰ Lal Chand defines the ideology behind the founding of *Hindu Sabha* in the following words:

⁶⁶ Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbols and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 2 & 94.

⁶⁷ Gordon, "The Hindu Mahasabha and the Indian National Congress," 165.

⁶⁸ Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism*, 210.

⁶⁹ Jaffrelot, "Hindu nationalism, Strategic Syncretism in Ideology Building," 12.

⁷⁰ William Gould, "Congress Radicals and Hindu Militancy: Sampurnanand and Purushottam Das Tandon in the Politics of the United Provinces, 1930-1947," in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (July, 2002), 628-29.

patriotism ought to be communal and not merely geographical [...] The idea is to love everything owned by the community. It may be religion, it may be a tract of country, or it may be a phase of civilization.⁷¹

According to the religio-nationalist Hindus' exclusivist view India and Hinduism are inseparably and eternally interrelated; for this reason only Hindus, by virtue of being born Hindu, could have the supreme right to live and rule in this land. Such Hindu religious-nationalism or communalism demonstrates exactly similar features of Islamic religious-nationalism, which has been vying to create pan-Islamic state, or some other religious-nationalism that do not tolerate other religious communities within their religio-politically demarcated borders. Therefore, militant Hindus, to a considerable extent, were accountable for the division of Indian subcontinent in 1947 because of their adamant and uncompromising form of religio-nationalistic conception on emerging Indian nation. It is most likely that on account of this religio-nationalistic standpoint Muslim leaders were forced to demand separate land for the Muslims from the late 1930s – the demand for the creation of Pakistan was formally launched only in 1940.⁷² However, the partition of India on religious lines “reignited”⁷³ the spirit of militant Hindus in their attempt to make India Hindu nation in which minorities should not exist or be subservient to the majority community. But they could not succeed in their plan because of Gandhi, Nehru and other secular minded Indian leaders. Hence, making of independent India a secular nation was a huge blow to the Hindu communalists and religious-nationalists. However, Hindu religious-nationalists have not given up their agenda of making India a Hindu *rashtra* even though it was declared a secular state by the Constituent Assembly in the Constitution adopted in 1950; rather these forces are

⁷¹ Lal Chand, *Self-Abnegation in Politics*, forward by Bhai Paramanand (Lahore: The Central Hindu Yuvak Sabha, 1938), 103; quoted in Jaffrelot, “Hindu nationalism, Strategic Syncretism in Ideology Building,” 13.

⁷² See Ayesha Jalal, “Secularists, Subalterns and the Stigma of ‘Communalism’: Partition Historiography Revisited,” in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (July 1996), 687-688.

⁷³ Malik and Vajpeyi, “The Rise of Hindu Militancy,” 312.

bolstered from the late 1970s to make all-out attempt to attain their longstanding religio-political goal.

Thus, from the early 1920s the *Arya Samaj* and the *Mahasabha* inculcated militant religio-nationalistic spirit and communalist passion among wider Hindu mass that made the public phase of Hinduism increasingly exclusivist and militant. An aggressive/militant Hinduism is clearly manifested during religious processions and festivals in many parts of India. In regard to such aggressive picture of Hinduism, Gooptu writes: “the dominant image of Hinduism emerged to be one of very large crowds of people, wielding staffs, flags, swords and other arms, marching in processions during religious festivals.”⁷⁴

IV.4.2. The RSS and Its Militant *Hindutva* Ideology

The RSS was found in Nagpur, in Maharashtra, in 1925 by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar. This organization too, like the *Mahasabha*, came into existence in reaction to the Hindu-Muslim violence that erupted in several parts of India during the early 1920s. The RSS was originally a Hindu socio-cultural organization that was devoted to protect Hindu ideals⁷⁵ and to define and create India a Hindu nation. Therefore, the RSS along with the *Mahasabha* and other Hindu organizations “opposed not only the Muslim League but also the Congress conception of India as a nation of many religions.”⁷⁶ However, during the leadership of Hedgewar the organization was kept away from direct affiliation with any of the political organisations that

⁷⁴ Gooptu, “The Urban Poor and Militant Hinduism,” 879.

⁷⁵ Joseph S. Alter, “Somatic Nationalism: Indian Wrestling and Militant Hinduism,” in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (July, 1994), 561.

⁷⁶ David Ludden, “Introduction,” *Making India Hindu: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India*, edited by David Ludden (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 13-14.

were fighting the British rule.⁷⁷ The distinguishing feature of the RSS, among the Hindu religio-nationalist organizations, has been its *shahkas* (branches), where ideological and physical training is imparted to young male volunteers. The RSS from the beginning of its history started its own military unit “in charge of supervising and implementing military discipline and full-scale infantry training, minus weapons (but with swords and lathis – metal-tipped bamboo staffs in the Shakhkas).”⁷⁸ The RSS volunteers (*swayamsevaks*) of each *shakha* are required to offer prayer before the saffron flag, which represents Hindu nation and the RSS “guru”.⁷⁹

In 1940, Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar (1906-1973) became the second *sarsanghchalak* (leader) of the RSS. From the time Golwalkar (also known as *Guruji*) took the leadership the institution began to grow in size. Meanwhile, Golwalkar co-opted the *Hindutva* – the term *Hindutva* (Hinduness) was coined by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966) in 1923 – ideology and attempted to directly transform the Hindu nationalism into action. Thus, Golwalkar’s RSS organization stands for an extreme form of Hindu nationalism that supports the notion of Hindu nation on the basis of Hindu values and Hindu religious-culture (*Hindutva*). According to the *Hindutva* ideology of Golwalkar all non-Hindus who want to live in Hindustan

must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ungratefulness towards this land and its age-old traditions but must also cultivate the positive attitude of love and devotion instead – in a word they must cease to be

⁷⁷ “Analysis: RSS Aims for a Hindu Nation,” in BBC News (March 10, 2003); available from http://news.bbe.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/655722.stm; Internet accessed: 2 May 2011.

⁷⁸ Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 94.

⁷⁹ Gwilym Beckerlegge, “Saffron and Seva: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh’s Appropriation of Swami Vivekananda,” in *Hinduism in Public and private*, 91.

foreigners, or may stay in this country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privilege, far less any preferential treatment – not even citizens' rights.⁸⁰

The above-quoted account makes it evident that Golwalkar and his organization's nationalism is an extreme form of exclusivist Hindu religio-nationalism which denies the rights of all existing non-Hindu and ethno-religious minorities in India. Besides Muslims and Christians, it excludes animists, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsees and schedule tribes; nevertheless, animists, Buddhists, Jains, Parsees and schedule tribes do not seem to openly challenge the Hindu claim as Muslims, Christians and Sikhs do. Such Hindu religio-nationalism can be termed as Hindu religio-cultural-colonialism, which aspires to do away with all non-Hindu cultures and religions. This extreme form of exclusivist Hindu nationalistic-spirit is continuously infused among many young Hindus in almost forty thousand RSS *shakhas* in more than twenty-seven thousand places spread all over India.⁸¹ Therefore, the RSS *shakhas* seem to play same role as those of Islamic *madrassas* where young Muslims are radicalised to destroy non-believers or infidels. Seemingly the methods adopted by both the institutions (*shakhas* and *madrassas*) to indoctrinate their young volunteers are similar – they differ in their ideology, but not in their tactics. The RSS has the capability to produce and mobilize thousands of Nathuram Godses (Godse assassinated Mahatma Gandhi in 1948 – he was a member of the RSS, the *Hindu Rashtra Dal*, and the *Hindu Mahasabha*) to terrorise religious minorities across India. Moreover, this militant organization poses a serious challenge to the Indian secularism and socio-political integrity of the Indian nation. The Indian government had thrice imposed ban on this organization due to its undemocratic and unconstitutional

⁸⁰ Quoted in Craig Baxter, *The Jana Sangh: A Biography of an Indian Political Party* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969), 31.

⁸¹ "RSS Claims rise in Shakha numbers, though Marginally," in *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi: March 16, 2011); available from <http://www.hindustantimes.com/RSS-claims-rise-in-Shakha-numbers-though-marginally/Article1-673908.aspx>; Internet accessed: 2 May 2011.

activities. The first ban was imposed in 1948 following the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi; the second ban was imposed in 1975 by Indira Gandhi; in 1993 it was banned for third time because of its role in the demolition of the Babri Mosque, in Ayodhya. These government bans imposed upon it are clear indications of the serious nature of this Hindu militant institution.

Furthermore, the RSS was instrumental in formation of the *Bharatiya Jana Sangh* (BJS) and the VHP. The BJS, a militant Hindu nationalist political party, was established in 1951 with the help of some senior RSS members, who were allowed by the organization to be actively involved in the party. Therefore, the BJS “became the most aggressive and determined of the Hindu nationalist Parties which were attempting to win power by constitutional means.”⁸² The burning vision of the BJS was the transformation of India into an organic Hindu nation by returning it back to its roots – according to the BJS ideologues, the “Indian society should draw increasingly on ancient Hindu traditions and rely less on Western ideas.”⁸³ This burning zeal of the BJS made it different and more dangerous from other Indian political parties. The BJS was dissolved in April 1979, on account of the power debacle in the Centre – after the power debacle many of the *Jana Sanghis* finally resumed an independent existence. However, in April 1980, the former BJS members helped to establish *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP),⁸⁴ the political wing of the *Sangh Parivar*, of which the RSS is a very vital organ.

⁸² B.D. Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Origin and Development of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3.

⁸³ Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics*, 4 and 6.

⁸³ Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics*, 3.

⁸³ Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics*, 4 and 6.

⁸⁴ Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and India Politics*, 4.

At present the RSS has about four and a half million active members all over India and more than hundred smaller militant Hindu organizations affiliated to it. The extreme form of exclusivist militant Hindu religio-nationalist ideology, its tens of thousands of *shakhas* where ideological and physical/military trainings are imparted to the young volunteers, millions of active members and more than hundred militant Hindu organizations, which are affiliated to it, project the RSS as more potential threat compared to other religious extremist/terrorist organizations in India.

IV.5. Post-1947 Hindu Religious Organization: The VHP and Its Modus Operandi to Create Religious Violence

From the beginning of Indian independence a deeper sense of insecurity and a fear began to develop among many Hindus on account of two specific reasons/assumptions. These assumptions are: fear of being overwhelmed by aggressive minorities; and minority favouring secular Congress government. According to Eva Hellman,

The concept of Hindus as being under threat from hostile forces is at the heart of the VHP discourse. The most frequently mentioned enemies are Christians, Muslims and Communists, with secularists and materialists also being denounced as inimical forces. They are said to represent threat such as separatism, anti-nationalism and disregard for spiritual and ethical values.⁸⁵

Therefore, the Hindus who have developed such insecurity and fear strongly oppose the claim of certain politicians that minorities are marginalized or suppressed in India. Suppression of minorities, in the view of Amar Zutshi, is a distortion of historical evidence. In Zutshi's understanding "it was the Hindus who were subjected to centuries of repressive Mughal rule, culminating in the rise of Aurangzeb and followed by the British Raj."⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Eva Hellman, "Dynamic Hinduism: Towards a New Hindu Nation," in *Questioning the Secular State: The Worldwide Resurgence of Religion in Politics*, edited by David Westerlund, 4th Impression (London: C. Hurst & Company, 2002), 242.

⁸⁶ Malik and Vajpeyi, "The Rise of Hindu Militancy," 317.

Moreover, the second assumption is more serious than the first one because it involves the secular government. The secular government, as supposed by them, unduly favours and supports these aggressive minorities or the enemies of Hinduism; therefore, the secular government becomes the enemy of Hindu dharma. This is why Niranjan Dev Tirtha, the 144th Jagatguru Shankaracharya and one of the most revered figures of Hinduism, said that “the Government is the greatest enemy of Hinduism because of its policy of appeasing the minorities.”⁸⁷ Likewise Rajendra Singh (former RSS general Secretary) claims that India is the only country where small minority rules the dominant majority, and there is no one who considers oneself defender of Hindu faith. In this regard these Hindus cite the constitutional provisions (specifically Articles 25 to 28 and 370)⁸⁸ that safeguard the religious rights of the minorities and grant special status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir – but, they do not have any problem with those Articles in the Constitution which are Hindu bias (e.g. as per the Article 342, Hindi in *Devanagari* script is made official language of India; Article 352 expresses the duty of Union government to develop, promote and spread Hindi language in India; Article 48 mentions the prohibition of cow slaughter; according to the Article 25, clause (2), sub-clause (b), Sikh, Jaina and Buddhist religions are categorized as Hindu religion⁸⁹).

⁸⁷ Malik and Vajpeyi, “The Rise of Hindu Militancy,” 317.

⁸⁸ See Ramesh Thakur, “Ayodhya and the Politics of India’s Secularism: A Double-Standards Discourse,” in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 33, No. 7 (July, 1993), 647.

⁸⁹ Pritam Sing, “Hindu Bias in India’s ‘Secular’ Constitution: Probing Flaws in the Instruments of Governance,” in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 6 (2005). 915, 916 and 917.

Therefore, Hindu leaders felt an urgent need of the formation of an international level Hindu umbrella organization.⁹⁰ Subsequently, with the help of the RSS leadership the VHP was formally organized in 1964 – originally with religious aims. The main objectives of the VHP are: to seek Hindu unity; to develop and spread Hindu values; to establish and strengthen relationship with Hindu Diaspora;⁹¹ to defend, protect and preserve the Hindu society from the alien religion, culture and ideologies, “to check the spread of Christianity among the tribal populations;”⁹² and to support the country-wide campaign against the cow-slaughter. Although the VHP originally was established with religious aims the seed of militant Hindu religio-nationalism was present in it. Moreover, the presence of RSS in the functioning of the VHP in organizational as well as functional level, did suggest that it contained militant feature from the very beginning – but, this militant Hindu religio-nationalist characteristic remained dormant in the VHP until late 1970s.

However, the VHP underwent transformation from the beginning of 1980s, and this revolution was mainly facilitated by the change of the RSS leadership, the decline of the Congress party and the establishment of the BJP. The RSS leadership was taken over by Balasaheb Deoras who, unlike his predecessors, regarded “active electoral politics an important vehicle for the dissemination of the idea of Hindu nationalism;” whereas his predecessors had avoided active politics and hold back the RSS and the VHP from actively participating in electoral politics. At the same time,

Deoras believed in employing religio-cultural symbols for political mobilization. The VHP within this changed orientation, seemed competent for the job of building a

⁹⁰ See Manjari Katju, “The Early Vishva Hindu Parishad: 1964 to 1983,” in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 26, No. 5/6 (May-June, 1998), 35.

⁹¹ Katju, “The Early Vishva Hindu Parishad,” 37.

⁹² Katju, “The Early Vishva Hindu Parishad,” 38.

mass-based political movement grounded on religious demands. This was a scenario where religion became a strong instrument for political power and identity politics which eventually became the basis of material advancement for sections associated with the VHP and related organisations.⁹³

Thus, from the early 1980s the VHP and the RSS opened new chapter in their account by actively involving in the electoral politics. From this time politicisation of Hinduism (and vice versa) and manipulation of Hindu religious symbols for political purposes began in full force. The *Sangh Parivar* and the BJP started to plan and organize various religio-political activities to accomplish the set goals. Due to the Hinduisation of politics communal tension began to heighten from the early 1980s, and in the second half of the 80s a series of communal violence was flared-up in several North Indian cities and towns, like Meerut, Ahmedabad, and Bhagalpur. “In the 1980s more than 7,000 people [mostly Muslims] were killed in some 4,500 communal incidents,” almost four times more than the figures of communal violence for the 1970s.⁹⁴

Apparently the main intention behind the creation of communal violence was consolidation of wider Hindu mass to garner support for the BJP. For this purpose Hindu religio-nationalists had to create a focal-point which would draw together all Hindus. What else could be the most appropriate focal-point than battle-cry against Muslims and Christians who have been perceived as serious threat to the survival of Hindu *dharma*. Meanwhile, the Hindu religio-nationalistic think-tanks had to find or generate definite on the spot-evidence/evidences of enemies’ cruelty which could be used as a valid explanation to inspire masculine/aggressive spirit among wider Hindu constituency and to justify any act of religious violence to produce communal riots against Muslims and Christians. Moreover, to carry out their plans and

⁹³ Katju, “The Early Vishva Hindu Parishad,” 56.

⁹⁴ *India Today* (15 January, 1990), 34; quoted in Thakur, “Ayodhya and the Politics of India’s Secularism,” 656.

projects effectively they required appropriate socio-political environment. Fortunately, the socio-political developments that began to take place from the late 1970s provided suitable ground to launch their planned projects. Subsequently, the religio-political strategies (like *rath yatra* and *Ramjanmabhoomi*) helped to increase the BJP's support base from the second half of the 1980s, and within a decade the party managed to increase its parliament seats from just two in the eighth *Lok Sabha* in 1984 to "85 in the 1989 election with 11.4% of the vote, and to 119 in 1991 with 19.9% of the vote."⁹⁵ How different aspects are linked together and what sort of on the spot-evidences were generated to create communal violence will be assessed in the following sections.

IV.5.1. Religio-Political Schemes towards Creation of Religious Violence

Three religio-political schemes – *Ekмата Yajna*, *Ramjanmabhoomi* and *Rath yatra* – that were executed during the 1980s and the early 1990s by the Hindu religio-nationalist organizations and their political wing are very significant in the study of Hindu religious terrorism. A brief evaluation of these religious schemes will help us to understand how and why communal violence was created by the Hindu religio-nationalists.

IV.5.1.1. *Ekмата Yajna*: Unity for Hindu Divinity

In the first half of the 1980s the VHP organized *Ekмата Yajna* (integration rite) with an objective to build-up Hindu unity. According to the VHP leaders, "India cannot be kept united without uniting the Hindus."⁹⁶ In the *Ekмата Yajna* Bharat Mata (Mother-India) was portrayed as one of the most prominent Hindu divinities and her image was worshipped by

⁹⁵ Thakur, "Ayodhya and the Politics of India's Secularism," 653; Robert G. Wirsing and Debolina Mukherjee, "The Saffron Surge in Indian Politics: Hindu Nationalism and the Future of Secularism," in *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (1995), 182.

⁹⁶ *India Today* (30 November, 1983), 34.

hundreds of thousands of Hindus on the way when it was taken in *yatra* (procession) from one part to another part of India.⁹⁷

The depiction of India as one of the prominent Hindu divinities suggests two things: first, India is embodiment of Hindu divinity, therefore, India is the holy land (which symbolizes physical body of divine mother) of the Hindus; second, Hindu divinities, the land, Hindu dharma (which may mean religion, culture, moral ethics, duties and responsibilities, obligations etc.) and Hindus are inseparably interrelated, and this relationship is eternally divine-ordained. Hence, those who refuse to honour or worship India as divine mother are not the children of the Mother (India); instead, they are the enemies of India, Hindu dharma and Hindu race. Whereas Muslims and Christians (due to their monotheistic belief system) refuse to give divine honour to Mother-India; so, they become the enemies of Hinduism and forfeit the right to exist within borders of India.

IV.5.1.2. *Rath Yatra*: Re-enactment of Mythical Battles between *Dharma* and *Adharma* (Good and Evil)

A *Rath Yatra* (chariot procession) was launched by L. K. Advani, the BJP leader, in September, 1990. The *Rath* was designed as the chariot of Arjun (legendary hero of the battle of Kurukshetra in the *Mahabharata*), so that the chariot would look like a war chariot, and decorated it with the RSS symbol (the saffron flag) and the lotus symbol of the BJP. The procession commenced from the Somnath Temple, in Gujarat, and passed through several places in Western and Northern India to reach Ayodhya.⁹⁸ The organizers of the *Rath yatra*

⁹⁷ Malik and Vajpeyi, "The Rise of Hindu Militancy," 315.

⁹⁸ Hansen, *The Saffron Wave*, 164.

called all Hindus to exhibit their *Rama Bhakti* (devotion to Rama) and *lok shakti* (people's power).⁹⁹ On the way the chariot procession was greeted by youngsters

. . . armed with bows and arrows, swords and trishuls (tridents), sadhus applied tilaks [religious mark on the forehead] of blood on Advani and other 'holy warriors,' and the BJP/RSS organizers organized rallies and welcome parties in towns and villages along the route. Prior passing through of the yatra, VHP and Bajrang Dal activists prepared the route with decorations, and saffron colors, and incited communal propaganda¹⁰⁰

Like the *Ekmata Yajna*, the objective of the *Rath yatra* was to seek and consolidate Hindu unity for the battle against the religious minorities that threaten Hindu *dharma* by occupying Hindu holy places, like the birth place of Rama. The *Rath yatra* was re-enactment of the battle of Kurukshetra and the war between Rama and Ravana – these wars are the reminder of ongoing cosmic battle between *dharma* and *adharma*. Thus, the *Sangh Parivar* and the BJP, through the *yatra*, attempted to make three things obvious: declaration of *dharma yudha* against the supposed enemies; justification of the holy war on the basis of Hindu history; and, demonstration of the proof of Hindu victory. The chariot of Arjun symbolized divine justification of battle against the enemies of Hinduism; Advani and other BJP leaders declared the commencement of the religious war against the enemies by representing themselves as Rama and Lakshmana (legendary heroes of the *Ramayana*) and by receiving *tilaks* of blood in the hands of *sadhus* (holy men); and, the Somnath Temple, from where the Chariot procession began, signified the Hindu victory – the Somnath Temple also symbolized future victories. Hindu unity was imperative in the battle against the enemies to liberate their sacred places. Seemingly to arouse anti-Muslim spiritual-passion among the wider Hindu public the RSS, the VHP and the *Bajrang Dal* activists instigated communal riots during the chariot procession. Rath of Advani, writes K. N. Panikkar,

⁹⁹ Thakur, "Ayodhya and the Politics of India's Secularism," 653.

¹⁰⁰ Hansen, *The Saffron Wave*, 165.

turned out to be ‘a chariot of fire.’ From the very beginning the yatra created tension between the Hindus and Muslims, even in localities far removed from its route. Between 1 September and 20 November, 116 communal riots occurred in which 564 people died.¹⁰¹

IV.5.1.3. *Ramjanmabhoomi*: Re-establishment of Conceived or Mythical Hindu Golden Age

From the 1980s Ayodhya issue has taken the central place in the Hindu communal debate. According to the Hindu understanding, based on the *Ramayana*, Ayodhya is the birth place of Rama, one of the ten major incarnations of god Vishnu (one of the Hindu trinity). However, the problem is not the birth of Rama in Ayodhya, but the belief that the place where the Babri Mosque stood is the exact location of Rama’s birth.¹⁰² Furthermore, Hindus believe that Zahiruddin Mohammed Babur (1483-1530), the founder of the Mogul dynasty in India, “ordered the construction of the mosque in 1528 after demolishing a Ram’s temple that had stood on the same spot.”¹⁰³ According to Panikkar, the row over the Babri Masjid, constructed by Mir Baqui, “a noble of Babur’s court, had simmered for long, at least since 1885 when litigation had begun for the right to property in the area.”¹⁰⁴ From the early 1980s this Hindu belief became an appropriate agenda for the Hindu religio-nationalists for the fulfilment of their religio-political design. They, applying various methods, attempted to communicate among the Hindus that construction of a Ram temple at its original place is must to inaugurate the re-establishment of the ancient Golden Age/*Ramrajya*. Finally, the *Sangh Parivar* and the

¹⁰¹ K. N. Panikkar, “Religious Symbols and Political Mobilization: The Agitation for a Mandir at Ayodhya,” in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 21, No. 7/8 (July-August, 1993), 71.

¹⁰² Peter Heehs, *Nationalism, Terrorism, Communalism: Essays in Modern Indian History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 156.

¹⁰³ Mahmood Monshipouri, “Backlash to the Destruction at Ayodhya: A View from Pakistan,” in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 33, No. 7 (July, 1993), 711.

¹⁰⁴ Panikkar, “Religious Symbols and Political Mobilization,” 63.

BJP managed to mobilize Hindu constituency in large number to entirely destroy the Babri Masjid within a day.¹⁰⁵

The legend of Rama as Vishnu's *avatara* is recounted in "the ancient Sanskrit epic Ramayana, as well as in countless later vernacular versions."¹⁰⁶ The character of Rama, basing on this religious text, has been developed as the archetype of righteous and just king – one who brings peace and happiness upon all his subjects – of the Indian (Hindu) culture. Thus, the legend of Rama and his birth place suited very well "to develop into a symbol of the struggle against the forces that threatened traditional Hindu society and values"¹⁰⁷ – "the religious cult of this incarnation of Vishnu," according to Bakker, "only assumes significant proportions in the period that saw the forces of Islam threatening to destroy Hindu society, many centuries after the formation of the Ramayana itself."¹⁰⁸

The above-analysed three religious projects explicitly suggest that the main focus of Hindu religio-nationalists was/is to terrorize (and subjugate) religious minorities by inspiring deeper religious hatred among wider Hindu constituency. Therefore, the activists of militant Hindu

¹⁰⁵ Raychaudhuri, "Sahdows of the Swastika," 259; Thakur, "Ayodhya and the Politics of India's Secularism," 645; Manju Parikh, "The Debacle at Ayodhya: Why Militant Hinduism Met with a Weak Response," in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 33, No. 7 (July, 1993), 673; Pradeep K. Chhibber and Subhash Misra, "Hindus and the Babri Masjid: The sectional Basis of Communal Attitudes," in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 33, No. 7 (July, 1993), 665; David Ludden, "Introduction. Ayodhya: A Window on the World," in *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India*, edited by David Ludden (Published by David Ludden, 1996), 1f, available from <http://googlescholar.com>, Internet accessed: 18 April 2012; Thakur reports: "The demolition of the mosque plunged India into the worst outbreak of communal violence since partition, with 1, 700 dead and 5,500 injured." Thakur, "Ayodhya and the Politics of India's Secularism," 645. For farther clarification see Chapter I.

¹⁰⁶ See Hans Bakker, "Ayodhya: A Hindu Jerusalem: An Investigation of 'Holy War' as a Religious Idea in the Light of Communal Unrest in India," in *Numen*, Vol. 38, Fasc. 1 (June, 1991), 89-90; available from <http://jstor.org/stable/3270005>; Internet accessed: 1 May 2009. On historical evolution of the legend of Rama, see Suvira Jaiswal, "Historical Evolution of the Ram Legend," in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 21, No. ¾ (March-April, 1993), 89-97.

¹⁰⁷ Bakker, "Ayodhya: A Hindu Jerusalem: An Investigation," 90.

¹⁰⁸ Bakker, "Ayodhya: A Hindu Jerusalem: An Investigation," 90.

organizations might have instigated communal violence against religious minorities during the time the above-mentioned projects were executed; Hindu leaders neither restrained their supporters from stirring communal violence, nor condemned the violent activities performed by the Hindu activists.

IV.5.2. Hindu Extremist Groups and Their Terrorist Activities

From the late 1960s to 1990s there emerged several extremist/militant Hindu *dals* (groups), *senas* (armies) and *bahinis* (armies) that are devoted to create communal violence or terrorise religious minorities in India. These extremist groups/armies are affiliated either to the RSS or the VHP or to both the organizations. Activists of these groups are given some sort of physical/military training by the All India Hindu Forum.¹⁰⁹ With the rise of these extremist Hindu armies – such as *Bajrang Dal*, *Akhil Bharatiya Shiv Shakti Dal*, *Shiv Sena*, *Trishul Sena*, *Durga Vahini* (Durga’s Battalion – it “is a women’s militant organization founded by RSS in 1990, which imparts training in martial arts, self-defence, and nationalist ideology to young women mainly from the lower castes.”)¹¹⁰ and *Abhinav Bharat* – the communal tension and violence between the majority and minority communities has been mounting in many parts of India from the early 1980s. Some of the resounding slogans of these Hindu extremist armies are: “*jo ham se takrayega choor choor ho jayega*” (whoever attempts to confront us will be crushed into dust); “*Hindu ki pahchan, Trishul ka nishan*” (Hindus’ identity is the sign of trident – trident is weapon of god Siva, one of the Hindu trinity);¹¹¹ “*jo to ke kanta bove tahi bove tu bhala. Voh bhi hum ko kya samjhega, para kisise pala*” (one who pricks you with a thorn, pierce the one with a spear and teach that person a lesson which he/she will ever

¹⁰⁹ See *Statesman Weekly* (September 20, 1986).

¹¹⁰ Hansen, *The Saffron Wave*, 100.

¹¹¹ *India Today* (May 31, 1986), 32.

remember);¹¹² “*Hindustan Hindu ka, nahi kisi bap ka*” (India belongs to Hindus only); “*Jis Hindu ka khoon na khaula, woh khoon nahin, pani hai* (the Hindu whose blood does not boil does not have blood but water).”¹¹³ These slogans accentuate that the main focal-point of Hindu extremists is to terrorise and eliminate religious minorities. Therefore, it is probable that in any pretext they can be overwhelmingly violent against the given minority communities. A critical assessment of two of the recent violent incidents against Muslims and Christians will help us to understand how these groups manage and execute their terrorist activities.

IV.5.2.1. Gujarat Genocide: “Fire for Fire”

In March, 2002, Gujarat was deeply shaken by communal violence. However, the Gujarat violence differed from other communal violence in several respects. According to Needham and Rajan, “several factors distinguished the communal violence in Gujarat 2002 from earlier riots, including the degree and kind of violence perpetrated against the Muslims”¹¹⁴ In most of the cases communal violence are “spontaneous and unthinking;” in other words, communal violence is a blind fury.¹¹⁵ But the Gujarat violence (also can be called genocide, because the intention seems to be elimination of the members of an ethno-religious community) “bore the imprint of long and meticulous planning of systematic military-style

¹¹² Kuldip Nayar, “In six Years Sectarian Clashes Have Intensified,” in *India Abroad* (New York: June 15, 1984), 2; *India Today* (October 15, 1983), 4.

¹¹³ Arvind Rajagopal, *Politics After Television: Religious Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Indian Public* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 30.

¹¹⁴ Anuradha Dingwaney Needham and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (eds), *The Crisis of Secularism in India* (Duke University Press, 2007), vii.

¹¹⁵ Mukul Dube, “The Vedic Taleban,” in *Economic and Political Weekly* (May 18, 2002), 1885; Richard h. Nixon, “The War in Our Cities,” address before the National Association of Manufacturers, New York City, 8 December 1967, quoted in James J. Kilpatrick, *Evening Star* (Washington D. C.) 26 December 1967, A13.

organization.”¹¹⁶ The pretext for the flare up of Gujarat violence was death of fifty-eight Hindus, mostly women and children, who were burned to death in a train which caught fire while it was stationed in Godhra town, in Gujarat; but, how the train caught fire remains a dispute. The train was carrying Hindu religious activists who were returning back from Ayodhya. Muslims of Godhra were blamed for setting train on fire and from the following day there began genocide against Muslims all over Gujarat for three days without any respite. During the violence extremist activists of *Sangh Parivar* slaughtered (many were burned alive) over a thousand Muslims,¹¹⁷ looted or burned down Muslim properties, raped Muslim women and made tens of thousands of Muslims homeless. During the violent spree against the Muslims Narendra Modi’s (the BJP Chief Minister of the state and a full-time member of the RSS) government failed to protect the members of the minority community in the state – besides, a “considerable evidence mounted that key figures in his administration orchestrated the carnage.”¹¹⁸ Moreover, the BJP government in the Centre neither did anything to stop the carnage in the state, nor arrested the responsible people in the state government after the carnage was over; instead, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who has been considered to be moderate BJP leader by many, blamed Muslims for triggering off the violence by setting the train on fire at Godhra. Vajpayee said,

wherever there are Muslims, they do not want to live in peace with others. Instead of living peacefully, they want to propagate their religion by creating terror in the minds of others.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Dube, “The Vedic Taleban,” 1885.

¹¹⁷ The Sangh Parivar includes the RSS, the VHP, the Bajrang Dal and other militant/extremist Hindu religious-nationalist groups. Aparna Devare, “Secularizing Religion: Hindu Extremism as a Modernist Discourse,” in *International Political Sociology*, 3 (2009), 157.

¹¹⁸ Sanjay Ruparelia, “Rethinking Institutional Theories of Political Moderation: The Case of Hindu Nationalism in India, 1996-2004,” in *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (April, 2006), 318.

¹¹⁹ Ruparelia, Rethinking Institutional Theories of Political Moderation,” 318.

Such statement of the leader of a nation, at that critical juncture, only suggests the complicity and gravity of the problem. Besides the failure of both the state and the Central governments to stop the violence, there are other factors that indicate that the violence was an act of Hindu religious terrorism. According to Dube,

Targets had been identified precisely and listed, and the manpower and materials of destruction had been moved in swiftly and efficiently. It was the demonstration of the logistics of war. All writers noted that state forces at the very least looked the other way and sometimes were active participants in the butchery. At some places the police steered victims into the arms of the killers, at others they themselves stepped in to shoot those who could not be killed in the primary control room and had mobile phones, as did the leaders of the 'rioters'. This is a strange form of spontaneity.¹²⁰

The negligence of the BJP led governments of the state and the Centre, spread of violence all over the state of Gujarat, blaming Muslims for the violence by the Prime Minister before thorough investigation of the train burning incidence, indictment of Modi and his government by the Concerned Citizens Tribunal ("The Concerned Citizens Tribunal headed by Justice Krishna Iyer released a report indicting the Chief Minister Narendra Modi and the state apparatus in what they clearly identified as a genocide against Muslims in Gujarat in 2002"¹²¹), re-election of Modi and his party by the people of Gujarat with popular mandate, mobilization of all section of Hindus (even tribals and ordinary Hindus),¹²² and gruesome slaughter of Muslim women and children make it evident that the Gujarat violence was pre-planned¹²³ by the Hindu extremists to systematically annihilate Muslim minority of the BJP ruled state.

¹²⁰ Dube, "The Vedic Taleban," 1886.

¹²¹ Devare, "Secularizing Religion," 187; *Times of India* (November 11, 2002).

¹²² See Devare, "Secularizing Religion," 187.

¹²³ The violence was created by the Hindu extremists to destroy the religious minority.

IV.5.2.2. Violence against Christians in Orissa: Design to Eliminate Religious Minority

In December, 2007, first phase of recent violence against Christian minority broke out in Kandhamal district in Orissa. The alleged mastermind behind the violence against the minority was Lakshmananda Saraswati, a radical VHP leader. The alleged reason for violence against the Christian minority was an assault on Lakshmananda (supposedly by some Christians), who led an anti-conversion and cow-protection movement.¹²⁴ In this period of violence three people were killed and thirteen churches were burned down by Hindu extremists.¹²⁵

However, the worst phase of violence against the minority took place during August and September, 2008. On 23 August Lakshmananda and four of his followers were shot dead by a group of gunmen, who stormed into his ashram (religious centre) in Kandhamal where the VHP leader and his followers were meditating. Immediately the *Sangh Parivar* blamed Christians for the assassination¹²⁶ although evidence clearly indicated that Maoists were responsible for the killing. Subsequently, thousands of Hindu extremists launched violent attacks against Christians and their establishments. The Hindu extremists did not even left orphanages which housed many orphan children. During this period of violence Churches and Christian houses were razed to the ground, fifty Christians were killed according to the report

¹²⁴ “Orissa Violence: NCM Seeks Report,” in *The Times of India* (Kandhamal: December 27, 2007); available from http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2007-12-27/india/27961410_1_orissa-violence-kandhamal-district-baligud; Internet accessed: 8 May 2011.

¹²⁵ “Orissa: Violence and Destruction Against Christians Accused of Killing Hindu Leader,” in Help AsiaNews.it (August 25, 2008); available from <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Orissa:-violence-and-destruction-against-Christians-accused-of-killing-radical-Hindu-leader-13052.html>; Internet accessed: 8 May 2011.

¹²⁶ <http://www.persecutionblog.com/2008/08/india-violence.html>; Internet accessed: 8 May 2011.

of the Asian Centre for Human rights, and thousands of Christians were made homeless.¹²⁷ The minority groups, including the All India *Mujlis-e-Mushwarat* (an umbrella body of Indian Muslim organizations) expressed their anguish over the continued violence in Orissa and demanded the ban on the *Bajran Dal*, the group which was also involved in the gruesome murder of Australian Christian missionary Graham Staines and his two sons (who were burned alive in their van) in 1999.¹²⁸

The *Sangh Parivar*'s history of religious terrorism against religious minorities in Orissa began in the late 1990s. Moreover, from the beginning of twenty first century the Hindu extremist groups – like the *Bajrang Dal*, *Durga Vahini*, and *Shiv Sena* – have been emboldened by the BJP's coalition government with the *Biju Janata Dal*. Angana Chatterji reports, "In October 2002, a *Shiv Sena* unit in Balasore district declared the formation of the first Hindu 'suicide squad.'"¹²⁹ The RSS has six thousand *shakhas* with around 1,50,000 volunteers, the *Bajrang Dal* has two hundred *akharas* (training and meeting places) with fifty thousand activists, and the *Durga Vahini* has around seven thousand activists in Orissa.¹³⁰ Besides these extremist groups there are several other militant Hindu organizations which are affiliated to the *Sangh Parivar*.

The reviews on Gujarat and Orissa violence reveal the following common features: production of on the spot-evidences to prove that the minorities are dangerous enemies of

¹²⁷ Angana Chatterji, "Hindutva's Violent History," http://www.tehelka.com/story_main40.asp?filename=Ne130908HindutvasViolentHistory.asp; Internet accessed: 8 May 2011.

¹²⁸ <http://in.christiantoday.com/articles/orissa-violence-officials-doubt-christians-killed-hindu-leader/2856.htm>; Internet accessed: 8 May 2011.

¹²⁹ Angan Chatterji, "Hindutva's Violent History," in *Tehelka Magazine*, Vol. 5, Issue 36 (September 13, 2008); available from http://www.tehelka.com/story_main40.asp?filename=Ne130908HindutvasViolentHistory.asp; Internet accessed: 8 May 2011.

¹³⁰ Chatterji, "Hindutva's Violent History."

Hinduism; spread of violence throughout the whole region within very short time; gruesome act of killing by burning alive (using inflammable items like kerosene and petrol) or mutilation of bodies; no mercy shown to women, disabled and children of the minority communities; destruction of minorities' property and their establishments with fire and overwhelmingly large human force; and, covert support of the BJP or coalition (in which the BJP was an important coalition partner) governments. In both the violent incidents the main reasons (or on the spot-evidences) for which the violence against the minorities were started appears to be production or generation of evidences by the Hindu religious extremists to carry out already planned design of religious terrorism. Although the BJP government and its machineries tried to prove that Muslims of Godhra were responsible for the heinous crime how the train caught fire remains controversial subject even now. There are some suggestions that the fire broke out from inside the compartment S-6 (the compartment which was the main target), not set on fire from outside. Sheela Bhatt reports that one of the main investigating officers in the Godhra train burning case, "has no doubt that the Sabarmati fire was meticulously thought out" plan.¹³¹ Noel Parmar, the (then) assistant police commissioner in Baroda and the investigating officer, recounted that when he went to the exact place where the train was halted before it was burnt down the first thing he "noticed was that the compartment's steps were intact."¹³² His argument, therefore, is that if the train was set on fire from outside the steps would be burnt first. So, he opines that such case is almost impossible to solve.¹³³

¹³¹ Sheela Bhatt, "Exclusive! Godhra Case Investigator Speaks," in *India Abroad* (February 28, 2011) available from <http://www.rediff.com/news/slide-show-1-exclusive-godhra-case-investigator-speaks/20110328.htm>; Internet accessed: 4 March 2011.

¹³² Bhatt, "Exclusive! Godhra Case Investigator Speaks."

¹³³ Bhatt, "Exclusive! Godhra Case Investigator Speaks."

Whereas the initial evidences, in the case of the main reason which triggered off the carnage against the minority in Orissa, clearly suggested that Christians had no hand in the assassination of the VHP leader; yet, violence broke out and the *Sangh Parivar*, in spite of the Orissa police report that Maoists were involved in the act of killing, went on blaming Christians. The above-stated facts have the tendency to suggest that the Gujarat and Orissa violence were pre-planned designs of Hindu religious terrorists to eliminate religious minorities from these states.

IV.5.2.3. Strategy of Hindu Religious Terrorism: “Bomb for Bomb”

A brief review of Malegaon, Ajmer, Hyderabad, and Samjhauta Express bomb explosion cases is very important in the study of Hindu religious terrorism. On 8 September 2006, four bombs, which were planted on bicycles near a mosque at a cemetery, exploded in Malegaon, a town in Maharashtra, killing 31 people and injuring 297 others.¹³⁴ In February 2007, the Samjhauta (Friendship) Express train that was travelling from India to Pakistan, carrying Pakistani and Indian Muslim passengers, caught fire due to twin bomb blasts.¹³⁵ The blasts and the fire killed 68 people and many were wounded. In May 2007, bomb explosion took place during Friday prayers at the Mecca Mosque (one of the largest mosques in India) in Hyderabad and, at least 14 people were killed.¹³⁶ *Ajmer Dargah Sharif*, a famous Sufi shrine

¹³⁴ Mumbai Bureau, “31 Killed, 100 Injured in Malegaon Blasts,” in *The Hindu*, Online edition (September 9, 2006); available from <http://www.hindu.com/2006/09/09/stories/2006090916980100.htm>; Internet accessed: 21 April 2011; “Malegaon Blast Mushawarat Chowk Anti-Terrorism Squad,” in Times of India (September 9, 2006); available from http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-03-07/mumbai28665724_1_malegaonblast-mushawarat-cowk-ant-terrorism-squad; Internet accessed: 21 April 2011.

¹³⁵ “Passengers reported hearing two blasts as the train passed near Panipat, about 80 km (50 miles) north of Delhi. The train – Samjhauta Express – was part of a service taking passengers from Delhi to Lahore in Pakistan.” Adil Najam, “India-Pakistan Samjhota Express Blasts: 60+ Dead,” in *All Things Pakistan* (February 19, 2007) [Article online]; available from <http://pakistaniat.com/2007/02/19/pakistan-india-terrorism-blast-samjhota-express-train-bomb-blast-dead/>; Internet accessed: 9 May 2011.

¹³⁶ “Hindu Holy Man Aseemanand in Custody over India Blasts,” in *News South Asia* (January 13, 2001); available from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12180193>; Internet accessed: 9 May 2011.

(which is a pilgrimage centre for Muslims, Hindus and people of other faiths) in Rajasthan, was bombed in October 2007. In this incidence three people were killed.¹³⁷ In Malegoan (once again) bomb explosion killed seven people and left more than 100 injured in 2008.

In the beginning Islamic terrorists were blamed for most of these bombings by the Indian government. However, recent arrests and police disclosures in connection with the incidents of bomb blasts exposed the network of Hindu religious terrorism. The CBI and the Anti-Terrorist Police Squad of Maharashtra arrested Swami Aseemananda (RSS leader), Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur, Lt. Col. Srikant Purohit (an army intelligence officer),¹³⁸ and several other Hindu extremists in relation with Malegaon bomb blast case. Aseemananda admitted his involvement in having planned bomb blasts at Ajmer Sharif, Mecca Mashid, Malegaon and in Samjhauta Express “in his confession, recorded under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code before Metropolitan Magistrate Deepak Dabas at Tis Hazari courts” on 18 December¹³⁹ 2010. The main intention, according to Aseemananda, behind bombing Muslim religious places was to avenge violent acts of Islamic terrorism. In his statement he said: “I told everybody that bomb *ka jawab bomb se dena chahiye* (we should reply to bomb blasts with bombs). I told everyone since 80 per cent of Malegaon are Muslims, we should explode the bomb in Malegaon.”¹⁴⁰ The bomb blast at *Ajmer Dargah*, according to him, was to deter Hindus from visiting the *Dargah*. He also named other people who were involved in the

¹³⁷ Vinay Kumar, “Swami Aseemananda’s Confession Reveals Hindutva Terror Activities,” in *The Hindu*, (New Delhi: January 8, 2011) [Article online]; available from <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article1073223.ece>; Internet accessed: 21 April 2011.

¹³⁸ “Malegaon Probe: Army Officer Sent to Police Remand,” in *Indian Express* (Mumbai: November 5, 2005); available from <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/Malegaon-probe-army-offices-sent-to-police/381746/>; Internet accessed: 21 April 2011.

¹³⁹ “Malegaon Probe: Army Officer Sent to Police Remand.”

¹⁴⁰ “Malegaon Probe: Army Officer Sent to Police Remand.”

planning and execution of the mission. Indresh Kumar (senior RSS leader), Joshi (the murdered RSS pracharak), Sadhvi Pragya Thakur and Sandeep Dange (senior RSS pracharak) and Ramji Kalsanga (senior RSS pracharak) are among the important religious figures who were involved in planning the acts of Hindu religious terrorism. Another shocking revelation of the CBI and police is that RDX was used in Malegaon and Samjhauta Express blasts,¹⁴¹ and Purohit is suspected of supplying the RDX from an Indian army store.¹⁴²

The above-cited facts exemplify that Hindu extremists could adopt/apply any technique to terrorise and massacre religious minorities in India. In the meantime, involvement of an army officer (while on active service)¹⁴³ in planning of religious terrorist activities suggests that Hindu religious terrorism has penetrated different segments and departments of Indian government.

IV.6. An Analysis of Hindu Religious Terrorism

The radical Hindu religious perception, that the Muslim and Christian religious minorities pose serious threat to the *pitri* and *punya bhumi* and Hindu dharma, inspired Hindu fundamentalists for extreme form of religious violence to terrorise, eliminate or subjugate these minority communities. However, to mobilize wider Hindu constituency for religious terrorism against the conceived enemies Hindu unity and stimulation of Hindu masculinity were vital. In this regard select Hindu religious texts – particularly *the Ramayana* and *the Mahabharata* – and Hindu symbols – mainly *Ramjanmabhoomi*, India pictured as divine

¹⁴¹ “Malegaon Blast Mushawarat Chowk Anti-Terrorism Squad.”

¹⁴² Nitin Gokhale, “Malegaon Blasts: Army to Reconvene Court of Inquiry Against Lt. Col. Purohit,” in NDTV (New Delhi: Updated March 12, 2011); available from <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/malegaon-blasts-army-to-reconvene-court-of-inquiry-against-lt-col-purohit-91152?cp>; Internet accessed: 21 April 2011.

¹⁴³ See Christophe Jaffrelot, “Abhinav Bharat, the Malegaon Blast and Hindu nationalism; Resisting and Emulating Islamist Terrorism,” in *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. Xlv, No. 36 (September 4, 2010).

mother, chariot of Arjun and gods' weapons – are being stage-managed by religious and religio-nationalist actors to transmit the message to all Hindus that the *dharma yudha* against the enemies of Hindu-race and Hindu-faith is sanctioned by divine will.

Moreover, exhibition of gods' weapons (such as tridents, bows, arrows and mace) in *rath yatras* and other religious processions appear to have two-fold purposes: to openly display their religious commitment to their divinities, and to spread terror among the enemies. In the meantime, the Hindu religious texts and symbols infused religious conviction among many Hindus that it was their religious obligation to destroy or terrorise the religious minorities to liberate Hindus' holy land and to safeguard Hindu dharma. Apparently the story of the battles between Rama and Ravana, narrated in *the Ramayana*, and between Pandavas and Kauravas, found in *the Mahabharata*,¹⁴⁴ instilled among many Hindus masculine passion like Rama's and Pandavas' forces (that stood for righteousness) who destroyed the forces of Ravana and Kauravas (who represented evil) in the battles at Lanka and at Kurukshetra. In both the battles divine beings – Rama, Lakshmana, Hanuman and Krishna – were involved to destroy the forces of evil. Evidently involvement of the divine beings in the battles against the evil forces remind every Hindu that there is ongoing cosmic battle between the divinity and the forces of evil; therefore, whenever an evil force raises its head and threatens Hindu dharma, it is believed that the divinity comes down on earth in human or in other forms to destroy the evil force to liberate Hindu dharma. In the Bhagavad Gita, IV: 7-8, Lord Krishna says:

For whatever the law of righteousness withers away and lawlessness arises, then do I generate Myself [on earth]. [...] For the Protection of the good, for the destruction of

¹⁴⁴ *The Mahabharata*, one of the Hindu epics, records the battle of Kurukshetra, a place in Haryana state of India. According to *The Mahabharata*, it was one of the greatest and devastating battles ever fought on earth. In this battle the cousin brothers, Pandavas and Kauravas, fought against each other for the kingdom – the Kauravas represent the evil force and the Pandavas the righteous force. The Pandava brothers killed all the evil forces of Kaurava and became victorious finally. The great heroes were Lord Krishna and Arjuna. See C. Rajogopalachari, *Mahabharata* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1976), 209ff.

evil doers, for the setting up of the law of righteousness I come into being age after age.¹⁴⁵

So, from 1980s the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) leaders, particularly L.K Advani, seem to have acknowledged the role either of Krishna or of Rama in the conceived battle against the perceived evil force that has threatened Hindu dharma by occupying the holy places of the Hindus –like Ayodhya, the birth place of Rama. This is why the BJP leaders were projected as Lord Krishna, Rama and Lakshmana, the divinity in human form, during chariot procession (*Rath yatra*) in September 1990,¹⁴⁶ to motivate and mobilize Hindu constituency for the holy war. The symbolical representation of god-man seems to have inculcated more courage and passion among many Hindus; in the meantime, the war-cry of the god-men (BJP leaders) made them violent warriors who ruthlessly killed, burned alive, mutilated and tortured innocent victims. It was like an act of sacrifice in which an innocent victim is killed without any mercy or regret. Thus, on the prevailing historical and socio-political contexts select Hindu religious texts and symbols work as fire to boil the blood of many Hindus to perform acts of religious terrorism against the minorities.

IV.7. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the main objective of Hindu religious-nationalists is to establish Hindu rule in India. These Hindus are vehemently against the idea that ethno-religious minorities should have equal rights with the Hindus. The main contributions of this chapter are that: Hindu religious symbols (such as cow and Vedic Golden Age) began to be stage-managed from the latter half of the nineteenth century to unite the caste and class ridden Hindu society; Hindu history has been reconstructed Hindu religio-nationalists to present

¹⁴⁵ “R. C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad-Gita: With a Commentary Based on the Original Sources* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1969), 184.

¹⁴⁶ See Hansen, *The Saffron Wave*, 165.

Hindu religion, Hindu culture and Hindu race as superior to all other religions, cultures and races; Muslims and Christians (for their missionary activities and for Muslim and Christian rule over the Hindus) have been identified as perpetual enemies of Hinduism and Hindu civilization from the time Hindu religious symbols began to be manoeuvred for Hindu unity; Sikhs were considered as deluded Hindus, therefore, they had to be brought into Hindu fold through purification rituals; Hinduism began to be projected as aggressive religion by the militant Hindu religio-nationalist organizations from the second decade of the twentieth century; Hindu hostility against the Muslim and Christian minorities intensified from the time the modern militant Hindu religio-nationalist organizations came into existence; for Hindu religio-nationalists Hinduism and India (or Hindustan) are inseparable from one another, therefore, India should be ruled by Hindu religious laws and principles (the first chapter explained that why religio-nationalist Hindus were against the secular project and equal religious rights and privileges granted to the minorities). These points explain why Hindu religion could foster religious terrorism against the religious minorities. In such Hindu religio-nationalist atmosphere the minorities' movement for geo-political demands and the rise of Naga insurgency (which will be discussed in the following chapter), Sikh religious militancy/terrorism and Islamic religious terrorism in Kashmir (studied in the preceding chapters) added more fuel to the already burning fire of Hindu religious-nationalism and anti-minority attitude, and gave rise to Hindu religious terrorism. Nevertheless, only a small segment of Hindus, who are deluded by reconstructed and perceived Hindu history, seem to support Hindu religious terrorism. So, the responsibility to rebuild trust among the conflicting communities, for maintaining communal harmony in the Indian society, lies on the shoulders of the majority of the peace-loving and temperate Hindu population. Besides, the peaceable sections of the minorities too have an obligation to work side by side with the Hindu majority

in restoration and rebuilding of trust among the conflicting fractions of the Indian society. The peace-mission initiated by the Naga Christian Church (discussed in the following chapter) to settle Naga problem peacefully could be a good illustration in this regard. Moreover, the model proposed in the final chapter in this thesis might be helpful for rebuilding affable environment among different communities in India.

CHAPTER V

NAGA INSURGENCY

V.1. Introduction

Naga insurgency is the main focus of study in this chapter, because Nagaland is one of the three mostly Christian dominated states in the Indian Union, and Naga armed conflict is one of the oldest unresolved armed conflicts in the world¹ and, in the opinion of some scholars, the epicentre and forerunner of all insurgency problems in Northeast India.² Naga militancy began in the 1950s in the Naga Hills (present Nagaland), then one of the autonomous hill districts in the state of Assam. The main objective of the Naga armed movement has been national independence of Naga inhabited areas. From the early 1950s the Indian state had launched military repressive measure, political and economic machineries to defeat the Naga freedom movement, but the problem remains unresolved until the present time. Due to the fight between the Naga extremist groups and Indian armed forces thousands of people (both Nagas and non-Nagas) lost their lives.³ Besides, the Naga extremist groups are suspected, by the Indian government, for supporting other insurgent movements⁴ in the Northeast by providing training and weapons. However, Naga insurgency appears to be different from Sikh, Islamic and Hindu religious terrorism.

¹ See Sanjib Baruah, "Confronting Constructionism: Ending India's Naga War," in *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (May, 2003), 321; Sanjib Baruah, *Postfrontier Blues: Toward a new Policy Framework for Northeast India* (Washington: East-West Center, 2007), vii, 16.

² According R. Upadhyay, "The Naga problem is the epicentre and fore-runner of all insurgencies in northeast India. It encourages almost all the ethnic groups in the region either for secessionist demand or for creation of separate statehood within Indian union." See R. Upadhyay, "Naga Insurgency – A Confusion of War or Peace!," in *South Asia Analysis Group*, paper no. 1256 (February 17, 2005) [Article online]; available from <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/%Cpapers13%5Cpaper1256.html>; Internet accessed: 10 August 2011.

³ According to Sanjib Baruah the Naga armed conflict cost "tens of thousands of lives." See Baruah, *Postfrontier Blues*, 16.

⁴ In July, 2009 the Indian Home Minister, P. Chidambaram expressed in the Parliament that "there is spillover of the Naga Insurgency into territories lying beyond the Nagaland state borders." See "Nagaland Assessment – year 2010;" available from <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/nagaland/index.html>; Internet accessed: 10 August 2011.

Although the main objective of Naga armed movement is geopolitical one, the underlying motivating factors seem to be religious, ethnic, historical and socio-political aspects, which are intensely fused together in giving rise to the Naga problem. So far no satisfactory study is done on these issues in explanation of the birth of the conflict even though certain researchers have discussed some of these matters in their arguments on the rise of the crisis. Thus, further study is necessary to investigate the important role of the given factors in the genesis and persistence of the problem.

The arrangement of the chapter is made in the following order. Firstly, standpoints of some of the intellectuals are examined; then my point of view, in regard to the rise of the Naga conflict, is proposed. Secondly, a brief review of the historical and pre-historical background of the Nagas is presented. It is essential to have a bird's eye view of the Nagas' historical context to trace the root cause of the Naga problem. Thirdly, importance of Christianity in the formation of Naga ethnicity is discussed. This discussion is expected to help the readers to understand how and why Christianity is one of the most vital parts of Naga identity. Fourthly, Nagas' ethno-religious apprehension and their aspiration of national freedom for Nagaland are assessed; then, I review the policy of the Indian state toward the Nagas to explicate how the freedom movement, which appeared non-violent in the initial stage, took violent form. Finally, Naga militancy, an assessment, suggested solution to the conflict and conclusion are tendered.

V.2. Scholars' Viewpoints on the Rise of the Naga Insurgency

Intellectuals' standpoints regarding the cause of the Naga problem can be classified into the following four categories: first, the British colonial administrative policy was accountable for the origin of the problem; second, Christian missionaries and foreign forces were behind the

creation of Naga conflict; third, political negligence and economic underdevelopment caused the crisis in Northeast India; and fourth, fear of losing ethno-cultural identity gave rise to the conflict.

V.2.1. British Administrative Policy Caused the Naga Problem

Scholars like Jyotindra Dasgupta, Dinesh Kotwal, Subir Bhaumik, R. Upadhyay, M. S. Prabhakara, Maya Chadda, B. B. Kumar and B. P. Singh hold British colonial policy accountable for the origin of Naga and other insurgency problems in Northeast India.⁵ In this regard these thinkers cite two main reasons: first, exclusion of the hill regions⁶ (particularly Naga and Lushai Hills – on further clarification on why hill areas were excluded from the direct administration see Appendix 9) of British Northeast India from the direct British administration; and second, segregation of hill tribes (Nagas and Mizos) by introducing “Inner Line” regulations, which strictly restricted outsiders from entering into the hill areas⁷ – “the Bengal-East Frontier Regulation, which brought into force what came to be known as the ‘Inner Line,’” was promulgated by the Lieutenant Governor of Assam in 1873, with the

⁵Jyotindra Dasgupta, “Community, Authenticity, and Autonomy: Insurgence and Institutional Development in India’s Northeast,” in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (May, 1997); Dinesh Kotwal, “The Naga Insurgency: The Past and the Future,” [Article online]; available from <http://www.idsa-india.org/an-jul-700.html>; Internet accessed: 10 August 2011; Subir Bhaumik, “Ethnicity, Ideology and Religion: Separatist Movements in India’s Northeast,” in *Religious Radicalism and Security in South Asia*, edited by Satu P. Limaye, Robert G. Wirsing and Mohan Malik (Hawaii: The Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2004); Upadhyay, “Naga Insurgency – A Confusion of War or Peace!,” M.S. Prabhakara, “Mother of Insurgencies or Reinvention?,” in *The Hindu* (March 26, 2011) [Article online]; available from <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/article1571528.ece>; Internet accessed: 10 August 2011; Maya Chadda, “Integration Through Internal Reorganization: Containing Ethnic Conflict in India,” in *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (September, 2002); B. B. Kumar, “Ethnicity and Insurgency in India’s North-East,” in *The Problems of Ethnicity in the North-East India*, edited by B.B. Kumar (Delhi: Astha Bharati, 2007); B. P. Singh, “North-East India: Demography, Culture and Identify Crisis,” in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1987).

⁶ M.S. Prabhakara, “Mother of Insurgencies or Reinvention?”

⁷ A. Mackenzie, *The Northeast Frontier of India* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1994), 55-56; Verrier Elwin, *Nagaland* (Shillong: P. Dutta for the Research Department, 1961), 43, 44.

approval of the Governor-General of British India.⁸ In the view of Kotwal Indian state took over scores of problems of the British days, and among those problems Naga issue is the most “intractable and protracted” one.⁹ Singh opines that the “divide and rule policy” of the British Raj had “an adverse impact on northeast India.”¹⁰ The British policy of seclusion, contends Chadda, left the hill people “resentful and suspicious of all governments that had sought to control the Northeast from New Delhi.”¹¹ According to Kumar, the British policy of gradual separation of the tribals and non-tribals, hill areas and the plain areas, “creation of ‘non-regulated,’ ‘backward’ and ‘excluded’ areas/tracks was able to break centuries of historical, cultural, social and religious continuance and connectedness.”¹² Dasgupta claims that the colonial power, till the last stage of its rule, exercised its “colonial reason and administrative cunning,” and always made distinction between the “Assam proper” and tribal peoples of the northeast, and these hill tribes were divided into mainly five¹³ different categories and subcategories – the five broad divisions were: “the Northern, North-eastern, and the Southern ‘Hill Tribes,’ the Nagas and Manipur.”¹⁴ Bhaumik and Kotwal assert that the British officials, before their final withdrawal from India, hatched a plan to separate entire Northeast region from India and Northwest region from Burma to form into an independent geopolitical entity, which would be turned into a special “Crown Colony” to ascertain a limited but strategic

⁸ P.C. Chakravarty, *The Evolution of India's Northern Borders* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1971), 39-40.

⁹ Kotwal, “The Naga Insurgency: The Past and the Future.”

¹⁰ Singh, “North-East India: Demography, Culture and Identify Crisis,” 260; also see R. Gopalakrishnan, *Insurgent Northeastern Region of India* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. LTd., 1996), 34.

¹¹ Chadda, “Integration Through Internal Reorganization,” 50.

¹² Kumar, “Ethnicity and Insurgency in India's North-East,” 18.

¹³ Government of India (1907), *North and North-eastern Frontier Tribes of India*, compiled in the Intelligence Branch, reprint (Delhi: Cultural Publishing House, 1984), 158.

¹⁴ Dasgupta, “Community, Authenticity, and Autonomy,” 351.

British presence in rim-land Asia. It was J. P. Mills, who first proposed the “Unification of the hill regions of northeast India and Upper Bruma” in 1942-43; later on this plan was given final shape by Regiland Coupland, who was secretary to Strafford Cripps.¹⁵ In the opinion of V. K. Anand, “the psychological face of the Naga insurgency began” at the time the Naga Club, which was formed in 1918 at Kohima for the promotion of Nagas’ interests, turned into an effective political organization of the Naga tribes.¹⁶

The above-mentioned arguments tend to suggest that if the hill areas of Northeast were wholly integrated with mainland India during the British period and free movement of the plains people into the hills was not restricted, then, the sense of a separate ethno-nationalism would not have developed. Hence, these arguments have an inclination to suppress the unique historical reality of the hill tribes of Northeast India and advocate socio-historical-cultural and geopolitical unity or close interconnectedness of Indian nation down from the Vedic period as propagated by Hindu religio-nationalists. Furthermore, it proposes that ethno-cultural nationalism is superimposed by colonial power therefore it has no historical basis or validity.

However, the Indian government had an ample time to resolve the Naga issue and win the trust of the Nagas on the Indian state, because the Naga insurgency began almost a decade after the Indian independence. The Indian government, instead of taking into serious and sympathetic consideration the Nagas’ concerns, demonstrated its military might (even before Naga insurgency began¹⁷) by launching military repressive measure to silence the Nagas’

¹⁵ See R. Coupland, *Future of India* (London: 1944), 160; R. Coupland, *The Constitutional Problems of India*, Part 3 (London: Oxford University Press, 1944).

¹⁶ V. K. Anand, *Conflict in Nagaland* (Delhi: Chanakya Publication, 1980), 55.

¹⁷ The Naga insurgency began in 1956, but “a massive crackdown on NNC [Naga National Council – the offshoot of Naga Club] took place in 1953 when troops in large numbers moved by the Government of India into the Naga Hills.” “Insurgency and Peace Efforts in Nagaland,” available from http://www.edspindia.org/nagaland_insurgency.asp; Internet accessed: 10 October 2011; also see H. Srikanth

movement. The military tactics of the Indian administration seems to have further alienated, not only extremist faction but also many moderate Nagas, from the Indian state. Why the Indian government did not explore and employ all possible political and economic ways and means, instead of military approach, to resolve the Naga concerns and apprehensions before the insurgency began? Indian leaders (particularly Gandhi and Nehru) were well aware of Nagas' demand quite some time before India got independence,¹⁸ then, why no effort was made to carve out separate autonomous state (which would include most of the Naga inhabited areas of the Northeast) for the Nagas right after India got freedom from the British rule? What took it more than fifteen years to create present state of Nagaland? Why boundary and certain other political issues not resolved at the time the state was demarcated? The argument, that British colonialism caused the problem, does not answer these questions; instead, it seems to echo Anglophobic characteristic and judgemental attitude.

V.2.2. Christian Missionaries and Foreign Forces Caused the Conflict

Christian missionaries have been attacked by Hindus from the early nineteenth century. The *Brahma Samaj* and the *Arya Samaj* were founded to face the challenge posed, as perceived by the leaders of these modern Hindu socio-religious movements, to Hinduism due to Christian missionary activities. J. N. Farquhar in his book, *The Crown of Hinduism* (published in 1913), wrote that educated Hindus considered Christian missionaries as great enemies of Hinduism because Christian missionaries, in the judgement of these Hindus, had attempted to

and C. J. Thomas, "Naga Resistance Movement and the Peace process in Northeast India," in *Peace and Democracy in South Asia*, Vol. 1, Issue 2 (2005), 62.

¹⁸ Lawrence E. Cline, "The Insurgency Environment in Northeast India," in *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 17, No.2 (June, 2006), 129.

destroy time-honoured customs and institutions, sacred literature and traditions, history and society of the Hindus.¹⁹ Christian missionary, according to Prof. Har Dayal,

is the arch-enemy who appears in many guises, the great foe of whatever bears the name of Hindu, the ever-watchful, ever-active, irreconcilable Destroyer of the work of the Rishis and Maha Rishis, of that marvel of moral, intellectual, and civic achievement which is known as Hindu civilization. Let us labour under no delusions on this point. You may forget your own name; you may forget your mother. But do not for a moment forget the great, all-important fact that the missionary is the most dreadful adversary you have to meet . . . the greatest enemy of dharma and Hindu national life in the present age.²⁰

Seemingly this missionary-phobic as well as Christian-phobic outlook began to take more aggressive nature from the time India got independence. Two factors were involved in the increase of aggressive Hindu attitude against missionaries and Christian church: on the one hand, antagonism against religious (particularly Muslim and Christian) minorities began to gain ground due to rising trend of Hindu religio-nationalism among many Hindus; and on the other, most of the Christian missionaries hailed from Europe and America therefore missionaries were considered as secret agents of the alien power and Christianity as foreign religious element cultivated in the minds of Indians (Hindus) by the missionaries with an intention to re-establish the alien rule by destroying Hindu religion, culture and civilization.

Therefore, from the very beginning of the Naga resistance movement Hindu communalist and nationalist forces and some top national political leaders of India accused Christian missionaries and foreign forces for inculcating the idea of freedom among the Nagas and providing support to them to begin armed rebellion against the Indian state. Nehru,

¹⁹ J. N. Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), 33. Also see E.C. Bhatt, "The Economic Background of the Christian Community in the United Provinces," in *National Christian Council Review* (Sept., 1938), 69.

²⁰ Quoted in Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism*, 33-34.

commenting on the memorandum demanding National independence for the Nagas, said, “as no Naga could have written”²¹ the memorandum. In the view of Nehru the simple minded Nagas would not have come up with such big idea; thus the concept of national independence for the Nagas, he surmised, might have been planted in the minds of the Nagas by Christian missionaries in collusion with some British administrators. This conception of Nehru was further confirmed by Gopinath Bordoloi, the then Chief Minister of Assam, who “blamed the Baptist missionaries for abetting ‘a foreign conspiracy to separate the Naga Hills from India and retain it as an imperialist stronghold.’”²² Therefore, within short time (in 1955) the remaining Baptist missionary was asked to leave Naga Hills – since then a strict control has been imposed on the entry of foreign missionaries into Naga Hills (now Nagaland). Furthermore, on a number of occasions charge had been made, by Hindu nationalists, that Christian missionaries had given encouragement to number of tribal political movements, particularly in the Naga Hills.²³ According to Upadhyay, due to the inducement of some Christian missionaries and with the support of some foreign powers a section of Nagas demanded secession of their territories on the line of Pakistan.²⁴ At the same time, missionaries were blamed for creating a wide gap between the hill people and plain people.²⁵

Besides, foreign powers, particularly Pakistan and China, were accused by the Indian government for providing training and weapons to Naga guerrillas to launch armed

²¹ Quoted in Neville Maxwell, *India and the Nagas*, Report No. 17 (London: Minority Rights Group, 1973), 10.

²² Maxwell, *India and the Nagas*, 10.

²³ J. H. Beaglehole, “The Indian Christians – A Study of a Minority,” in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1967), 77; also see *Lok Sabha Debate*, Vol. VII, Col. 4539.F (1962).

²⁴ Upadhyay, “Naga Insurgency – A Confusion of War or Peace!”

²⁵ See Chadda, “Integration through Internal Reorganization,” 50.

conflict against the Indian state. Lawrence E. Cline says, “The Indian government is apt to see the hidden hand of Pakistan” behind every problem in India, “but there are strong indications that Islamabad has provided some fairly significant support to several insurgent movements [which includes Naga militant group/s] in the Northeast India.”²⁶ According to Bhaumik and Sanjay Hazarika, from 1956 onwards Pakistan and China provided training and other logistic supports to the Naga and other insurgent groups in the Northeast India till the early 1970s, but Pakistani help stopped after East Pakistan (present Bangladesh) got freedom. However, in the late 1970s, confirm Bhaumik and Hazarika, Bangladesh military rulers began to help them.²⁷

The alleged involvement of Christian missionaries and foreign powers in the rise of the Naga conflict encouraged the hardliners (particularly *Jana Sangh*) in the Indian Parliament, from the very beginning of the Naga independence movement, to pressurise the Indian government to exercise its “economic and military power to impose an ‘Indian solution’ on Nagaland, regardless of Naga opposition and the denial of democratic processes among the Naga people.”²⁸ The Hindu nationalist party issued a number of policy statements concerning Naga problem or the question of policy toward the tribal people in the North-East Frontier areas.²⁹ Seemingly the intention of the hardliners was to

²⁶ Cline, “The Insurgency Environment in Northeast India,” 140.

²⁷ For details of Chinese, Pakistani and Bangladeshi support to Northeast insurgent groups, see Subir Bhaumik, *Insurgent Crossfire: Northeast India* (Delhi: Lancers, 1996); Sanjay Hazarika, *Strangers of the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from India's Northeast* (Delhi: Viking, 1994); also see “India’s troubled Northeast,” in *The International Institute for Strategic Studies*, Vol. 10, Issue 6 (July, 2004) [Article online]; available from www.iiss.org/stratcom; Internet accessed: 10 September 2011.

²⁸ Gordon P. Means, “Cease-fire Politics in Nagaland,” in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 11, No. 10 (Oct., 1971), 1019.

²⁹ See *The Statesman Weekly* (22 June, 1968), 16; *The Assam Tribune* (13 June, 1968), 3; (18 June, 1968), 1 & 6; (28 February, 1969), 10.

repress the Naga freedom movement by employing military power without giving any consideration to the Nagas' demands.

There are two major weaknesses with the argument that Christian missionaries and foreign hands were behind the creation of Naga problem: first, it sounds like an argument postulated in support of the use of harsh military measure (launched by the Indian government from the early 1950s) to crush Naga demand by force; second, the explanation attempts to invalidate ethno-historical fact of the Nagas and the good works done by the missionaries among the Nagas³⁰ and other tribes (Mizos, Khasis and Garos – ref. Appendix 10 for explanation on the good works of Christian missionaries) of Northeast region – making Christian missionaries responsible for the Naga conflict clearly suggests Hindu nationalists' propaganda of vilification of Indian Christianity (in general) as foreign religion which, in their judgemental view, serves foreign interests. Moreover, the proposition, that Christian missionaries and foreign forces were behind the rise of Naga conflict, either disregards or does not give due consideration to the underlying ethno-religio-cultural issues and apprehensions of the Nagas. Hence, the argument is self-defensive, imbalanced, biased and deficient.

V.2.3. Economic Underdevelopment and Political Negligence

P.R. Bhattacharjee, Purusottam Nayak, Shibani Kinkar Chaube, Sunil Munsi, Amalendu Guha, O.M. Rao, Udayon Misra and Bethany Lacina suggest that economic and political negligence of the Northeast are the main reasons for the Naga and other insurgency

³⁰ See A. S. Shimrey, *Let the Freedom Ring: Story of Naga Nationalism* (New Delhi: Promilla & Co., 2005), 42-43.

problems in the region.³¹ Northeast India, according to Bhattacharjee and Nayak, has two distinctive characteristics – persistent underdevelopment and growing insurgency – and these two features are interconnected to each other, which they term as “vicious circle”; i.e., on the one hand, economic underdevelopment gave rise to Naga insurgency,³² and on the other, the growing insurgency problems contributed towards stagnation of economic development in the region. Moreover, the indigenous people of the region get no significant role to play in the developmental works that have been undertaken by the Indian government in the region, because those developmental projects are planned and directed by the Centre. Therefore, Bhattacharjee and Nayak maintain that what looks like revolt against the Indian government to attain either sovereignty or autonomy “is actually a violent expression of grievance against a political and economic structure in which the indigenous people” are given a little political share and economic benefit.³³ In the view of P. C. Dutta, “economic deprivation, disparity and lack of development have been responsible for the rise of conflict and insurgency” in the region.³⁴ In the observation of Chaube, Munshi and Guha hardly any development took place in the Northeast (mainly in the hill regions) till 1971 although the region has large reserves of oil, coal, silimanite, limestone, bamboo and timbers distributed over wide areas. As per their study, which was

³¹ See P.R. Bhattacharjee and Purusottam Nayak, “Vicious Circle of Insurgency and underdevelopment in Northeast India;” [Article online]; available from http://www.freewebs.com/pnayak/research_Papers/33p.pdf; Internet accessed: 19 August 2011; Shibani Kinkar Chaube, Sunil Munsu and Amalendu Guha, “Regional Development and the National Question in North-East India,” in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (August, 1975); Udayon Misra, *The periphery Strikes Back: Challenges to Nation-State in Assam and Nagaland* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 2000); O.M. Rao, *Focus on North East Indian Christianity* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1994); Bethany Lacina, “Does Counterinsurgency Theory Apply in Northeast India?” in *India Review*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (July-September, 2007).

³² Bhattacharjee and Nayak, “Vicious Circle of Insurgency and underdevelopment in Northeast India,” 1.

³³ Bhattacharjee and Nayak, “Vicious Circle of Insurgency and underdevelopment in Northeast India,” 7.

³⁴ P. C. Dutta, “Problems of Ethnicity and Security in North-East India,” in *Perspective of Security and Development in North East India*, edited by S. K. Agnihotri and B. Dutta (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Co., 2005), 112.

published in *Social Scientist* in 1975, the lowest levels of growth (includes economic growth, infrastructure, educational institutions and medical centres or institutions) was found in more than 62 percent of the total area (which included Naga Hills, Lushai Hills, North East Frontier Agency [NEFA] and other hill areas) till 1971; only 12 percent of the total area (plains and some parts of Khasi and Garo Hills) fell in the top levels of growth.³⁵ This disparity, in their view, was at the root of many tensions and insurgency problems.³⁶

Meanwhile, Lacina and Misra are of the opinion that a control over all local administrative affairs by the Central Government aggrieved the people of the region and encouraged armed movement. J. R. Mukherjee, a retired army lieutenant general, in his book *An Insider's Experience of Insurgency in North-East*, writes:

Control over all matters of even trivial policy is currently exercised through Delhi. This implies handling by bureaucrats and politicians sitting in Delhi, who do not even know the north-east or comprehend the local situation - their portfolios are also changed very frequently – one can even quote situations where there were no officials to handle important subjects for long periods during crisis ridden times.³⁷

Political and economic factors, no doubt, have been deeply involved in the rise of insurgency problems in Northeast India; however, only economic and political reasons do not satisfactorily explain the cause of the Naga extremist movement. During the Colonial period (except Khasi Hills) no economic development took place in the hill areas. Nagas and other hill tribes persisted on their traditional method of livelihood. Thus, economic underdevelopment would not have so much impact on the life and political outlook of the

³⁵ Chaube, Munsi and Guha, "Regional Development and the National Question in North-East India," 55-57.

³⁶ Chaube, Munsi and Guha, "Regional Development and the National Question in North-East India," 59.

³⁷ J. R. Mukherjee, *An Insider's Experience of Insurgency in North-East* (London: Anthem Press, 2005), 95.

Naga community during the early years of Indian independence. When we talk about political involvement in relation to Naga insurgency, we have to go back to 1929, the year in which a delegate of Nagas strongly expressed their unwillingness to become a part of Assam or any other geopolitical entity when the Simon Commission on constitutional reforms visited Kohima (this point will be discussed further in the later section). Thus, the later political developments (which were against Nagas' aspiration) might have exasperated many Nagas and forced them to take up arms against the Indian state; nevertheless, the political factor by itself does not define the cause of the Naga uprising. Therefore, the argument that economic and political factors caused the problem seems to be inadequate.

V.2.4. Fear of Losing Ethno-cultural Identity

Another explanation concerning the cause of the insurgency problem in Northeast is an apprehension that ethno-cultural identity is at risk. Mainly three interconnected factors – immigration, alienation from land and integration/assimilation – are supposed to have generated such fear among the people of Northeast. With British occupation of the region there began a steady influx of people into the region from the mainland India, mainly from the undivided Bengal. The constant flow of people from outside territories, in the view of Bhaumik, Weiner and Nag, augmented ethnic and religious diversity and gave birth to “nativist-non-nativist” conflict.³⁸ From 1901 to 1981, observes Dasgupta, the region's population grew six times on account of the unchecked inflow of people from neighbouring regions and countries (mainly from Burma and East Bengal).³⁹ The annual

³⁸ See Bhaumik, *Ethnicity, Ideology and Religion*,” 222f; also see Myron Weiner, *Sons of the Soil: migration and Ethnic Conflict in India* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1978); Sajal Nag, *Roots of Ethnic Conflict: Nationalities Questions in Northeast India* (Delhi: Manohar, 1990).

³⁹ Dasgupta, “Community, Authenticity and Institutional Insurgence,” 350.

growth of population in the region from 1951 to 1961 was 3.5 percent – Tripura 6 percent and Naga Hills 5.6 percent – whereas India's annual growth rate for the same period was 1.96 percent.⁴⁰ Tripura, among all other states, had born the largest brunt of population growth. According to Robbins Burling:

Two or three generations ago Tripura State was predominantly Tibeto-Burman, but so many Bengalis have now settled there that the indigenous Tibeto-Burman speaking Kokborok, once the dominant group, have been reduced to a minority to their own homeland.⁴¹

Migrant population, says Erika Forsberb, can cause ethnic conflict when immigrants compete over resources, such as employment and cultivable land; in such case the local population may perceive a significant risk to the existing demographic or political setup.⁴² From 1947 the large-scale migration of population from outside, argues Singh, alienated hill tribes of several areas of the region from their land and caused widespread identity crisis, which was further accentuated by the inability of the immigrant population to adopt to local languages, customs and traditions. According to Singh, tribal peoples' cultural traits, language, code of laws, geography and socio-economic institutions are the main features of their distinct identity; therefore, the extraordinary attachment of a tribal group to land is an intricate "web of relationships, the primary forces of which is economics."⁴³ In the opinion of B.R. Rizvi, ethnic insurgencies in Northeast India involve the assertion

⁴⁰ See A. Sebastian, "Migration in North-Eastern Region of India," in *The Patterns and Problems of Population in North-east India*, edited by Datta Ray (New Delhi: Uppal Publishing, 1986), 63-65.

⁴¹ See Chaube, Munsu and Guha, "Regional Development and the National Question in North-East India," 62. Robbins Burling, "The Tibeto-Burman Languages of Northeastern India," in *The Sino-Tibeto Languages*, edited by Graham Thurgood and Randy J. LaPolla (London: Routledge, 2003), 169.

⁴² Erika Forsberb, "'Sons-of-the-Soil' and Local Insurgencies: Assessing the impact of Migration on Civil Conflicts in Northeast India Using the UCDP Geo-Coded Events Data," Paper presented at the SGIR 7th Pan-European International Relations Conference in Stockholm (9-11 September, 2010), 13.

⁴³ Singh, "North-East India: Demography, Culture and Identify Crisis," 270 - 278.

of ethnic and cultural identities of various ethnic groups.⁴⁴ The consciousness of ethnic identity, affirms Rizvi, began from the time of the colonial period.⁴⁵ Ved Prakash opines that one of the root causes of insurgency in the Northeast is fear of ethnic and cultural identity at risk in the midst of the “mega-identity” called India.⁴⁶ Walter C. Ladwig suggests that ethnicity and identity are the sources of the Naga and Mizo conflicts against the Indian government because neither the Nagas nor the Mizos “identified themselves as ‘Indian’ and their customs and religious practice set them apart, at least in their own minds, from the Indian mainstream;” meanwhile, this problem of identity was further complicated by the quality of governance (which was low in both Naga Hills and Lushai Hills) before the violence broke out.⁴⁷ According to Srikanth and Thomas, the Indian nationalist leaders, right after they took over the political authority from the British government, desired to build-up a strong and united nation-state in India; in this effort of nation building the Indian state, applying a carrot and stick policy, sought to totally integrate even the tribal regions, which were “excluded” and “partially excluded” by the British administration.⁴⁸ But, the Nagas resisted the assimilative move on the basis of their “distinct” ethnic identity and “unique” history.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ B. R. Rizvi, “Ethnicity and Ethnic Movements in North-East India,” in *Ethnic Issues, Secularism and Conflict Resolution in Northeast India*, edited by Bimal J. Deb (Shillong: Concept Publishing Company, 2006), 17.

⁴⁵ Rizvi, “Ethnicity and Ethnic Movements in North-East India,” 26.

⁴⁶ Ved Prakash, *Terrorism in India’s North-East: A Gathering Storm* (Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2008), 31.

⁴⁷ Walter C. Ladwig, “Insights from the Northeast: Counterinsurgency in Nagaland and Mizoram,” A Paper Prepared for *Lessons from India’s Experience for the Future of Counterinsurgency Policy*, Part II (Washington: 3-4 June, 2008), 4. According to Peter Kunstadter, societies of Northeast India look “less and less India and more and more like the highland societies of Southeast Asia.” See Peter Kunstadter, *Highland Societies of Southeast Asia* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1967).

⁴⁸ Srikanth and Thomas, “Naga Resistance Movement,” 57.

⁴⁹ Srikanth and Thomas, “Naga Resistance Movement,” 57.

It is a fact that from the beginning of Indian independence survival of ethno-cultural identity has been one of the main concerns of the most of the tribal societies of Northeast India. Mainly two factors – huge influx of outside population and the policy of total integration (which also suggests assimilation) of the post-independent Indian state – appeared to have given rise to the apprehension that ethnic and cultural identity has been in great danger. Immigrants displaced many tribal people from their land (particularly in Tripura) and their subsistence economy. Land, for the tribal people, is not only the primary force of their economy, but it is related to their history, their ancestors, their family ties, their tradition and their religion.⁵⁰ Ethno-socio-cultural structure of the tribal society begins to crumble down once the tribal people are alienated from their land, therefore, claim or reclaim of land is vital to assert or reassert their ethno-cultural identity. Thus, one cannot deny that some of the insurgent groups (which came into existence from the 1960s) in the region were motivated by ethnic identity factor.

However, identity at risk theory too, on its own, cannot describe the main cause of the Naga conflict, although ethnic identity issue is one of the correlated motivating factors of the crisis. Naga ethnicity is more complex compared to other ethnicities and, at the same time, Christianity appears to have played a vital role in shaping the Naga ethnic identity; therefore, without Christianity Naga ethnicity cannot be understood rightly. At the same time, the immigration problem, which had/has severe impact on the tribal peoples of Tripura and other areas of the Northeast, did not affect the Nagas even though the population growth of Naga hills increased almost six times during 1951 to 1961 – there might be other reasons, like development of better health care and education, for population growth besides immigration from outside. In addition, the Naga conflict seems

⁵⁰ See Singh, “North-East India,” 270.

to have different socio-historical setting compared to other insurgent groups; therefore, the case of the Naga insurgency has to be considered separately from other armed movements.

V.3. Ethno-religious Apprehension, Historical and Political Contexts gave Rise to the Naga Conflict

The above-discussed arguments arguably present either biased or incomplete explanation of the main cause of the Naga problem. Therefore, I suggest that historical factors, ethno-religious concerns and (unsympathetic) policy of the post-independent Indian state motivated Naga insurgency. In the Naga debate the aspiration of freedom occupies the central place, because the consciousness that the Naga inhabited areas should not be made part of any other territory seems to have inspired the Nagas to seek national independence for Nagaland from the British period. Thus, it is indispensable to investigate: whether the concept of freedom, as suggested by Indian and Hindu nationalist intellectuals, was inculcated by alien forces from the 1920s or the concept has historical basis; the impact of Christianity in determining the modern Naga ethnicity and nationalism; and, what were the apprehensions or concerns behind the expression of strong protest against the British plan to make Naga territory part of Assam. In this regard we need to briefly review the historical background of the Nagas to comprehend the underlying socio-historical fact that might help us to trace back the root of the problem.

V.4. The Nagas: Meaning of the Term “Naga”

From long time there has been a dispute on the meaning and derivation of the word Naga. J. H. Hutton, the chief authority on the Naga tribes, at first thought that it was a corrupted form of the Assamese word *Naga* (pronounced as *Noga*) which probably meant “a

mountaineer,' from the Sanskrit nag, a mountain or inaccessible place.” Later on he recanted this view due to “the fact that Ptolemy in the third century and Shyabbu’ldin Talish in the Sixteenth both speak of Nagas as *nanga*, or ‘naked;’”⁵¹ however, in the opinion of W. Robinson, this was not a very strong argument.⁵² Weddell “explains Naga as meaning ‘hillman;’” whereas Peal “derives it from *nok*, a word used by some Eastern Naga tribes for ‘people’.”⁵³ In the view of Reid “‘Naga’ is not a term the tribesmen themselves would ordinarily use; it is merely an Assamese word meaning ‘naked’.”⁵⁴ “The most likely derivation,” says Elwin,

is that which traces ‘Naga’ from the word *nok* or ‘people,’ which is its meaning in a few Tibeto-Burman languages, as in Garo, Nocte and Ao. It is common throughout India for tribesmen to call themselves by words meaning ‘man’, an attractive habit which suggests that they look on themselves simply as people, free of communal or caste associations.⁵⁵

Whatever might be the derivation and meaning of the term Naga, one thing is obvious that the word was not originally used by the Naga tribes themselves, it was the generic identity given to them by outsiders. This generic term was either used in derogatory form or to identify the hill tribes that lived a free and natural way of life in different realm.

V.4.1. The Nagas: Historical Background

Nagas are the aboriginal inhabitants of several hill areas (Nagaland and part of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh) in Northeast India and Sagaing Division and Kachin State

⁵¹ J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas* (London: 1921), 5; Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, 1.

⁵² W. Robinson, *Descriptive Account of Assam, to which is Added a Short Account of Neighbouring Tribes* (London: 1841), 380.

⁵³ W. Robinson, “The Origin of the Nagas,” in *India’s North-East Frontier in the Nineteenth Century*, edited with an Introduction by Verrier Elwin, second impression (London: Oxford University Press 1962), 26.

⁵⁴ Robert Reid, *Years of Change in Bengal and Assam* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1966), 107.

⁵⁵ Elwin, *Nagaland*, 4. W. H. Furness, “The Ethnography of the Nagas of Eastern Assam,” in *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 32 (July-December, 1902) [Article online]; available from <http://www.jstor.org/pss/2842832>; Internet accessed: 28 October 2011.

in North-West Myanmar. The Nagas, according to Elwin and Alemchiba, belong to the Indo-Mongoloid group and they speak the Tebeto-Burman dialects of Sino-Tibetan family. Racially the Nagas belong to Sino-Mongolian family and linguistically they are related to the Tibeto-Burman language group.⁵⁶ It is very difficult to determine how long the Nagas have been in possession of their present habitation. The origin, patterns and period of migration of the Nagas are some of the most difficult tasks that lie before the present and future scholars to be unravelled.⁵⁷ The earliest reference to the Nagas, claims Shimrey, was made in 150 A.D. by Claudius Ptolemaius in his geography, where he mentioned the Naga inhabited region as “the Realm of the naked.”⁵⁸ But, one cannot be assured that Ptolemaius or Ptolemy ever visited the land of the Nagas – he might have collected the information from a third party.⁵⁹ S. K. Chatterjee firmly believed that the word *Kirata*, mentioned in the Vedas, referred to “all those Sino-Tibetan-speaking tribes, Mongoloids of various types in race, who entered into or touched the fringe of the cultural entity that is India – the Himalayan tribes (the Nepal tribes and the North-Assam tribes), the Bodos and the Nagas,” and other tribal groups of Northern and North-eastern Himalayan regions.⁶⁰ Elwin and Kotwal, too, support the view of Chatterjee that the hill tribes (including the Nagas) were the ones mentioned in the ancient Sanskrit literatures (more than a thousand years Before Christ) as *Kiratas*, who were different from Aryan

⁵⁶ See Elwin, *Nagaland*, 1; Alemchiba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, 2- 3.

⁵⁷ See R. Vashum, *Naga's Right to Self-Determination*, Second Edition (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2005), 19; Furness, “The Ethnography of the Nagas of Eastern Assam.”

⁵⁸ Shimrey, *Let Freedom Ring*, 27.

⁵⁹ See J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, with forward by Balfour Henry, supplementary Notes and bibliography by J. H. Hutton (London: Macmillan, 1926), 1.

⁶⁰ S. K. Chatterjee, *Kirata-Jana-Kirti* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1951), 167; Suniti Kumar Chatterji, “Kirata-Jana-Jati: The Indo-Mongoloids: their Contribution to the History and Culture of India,” in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XVI, No. 2 (1950).

and pre-Aryan people of the plains.⁶¹ Although the term *Kirata* might refer to the hill tribes possessing distinct physical features, cultures, customs and traditions from that of the Aryan and pre-Aryan people of the plains there is no guarantee that the Nagas were among those hill tribes, mentioned in the ancient Sanskrit texts.

Nevertheless, the Nagas have been living in the hill areas of Northeast India and North-West Myanmar from the pre-historic period. Lack of any historical record of their origin and migration clearly indicates that the Nagas have probably lived in their present homeland for an unknown period of time (probably for tens of centuries) in total isolation and without any sort of outside interference. This was why they appeared to have evaded any kind of outside socio-cultural or religious influence. Before their conversion to Christianity the Nagas were “persisting in an ancient type of culture virtually uninfluenced by the Hindu civilization of the plains of Assam and Buddhism of Burma.”⁶²

To conjecture the pre-history and history of the Nagas till thirteenth century A.D. (from 13th century onward we can find some written historical accounts about the Nagas) we have to wholly rely on the myths of their origin. Every Naga tribe has its own myth of origin; but all Naga myths indicate one thing that their ancestors came out of the land which they possess. “Going by the legends,” writes Vashum, “one forms a rough idea that most of the Naga tribes traced their origin from Makhel⁶³ (or ‘Mekhoramia’ in Angami meaning ‘the place of departure’) or its adjacent area. Makhel is about ten miles from

⁶¹ Elwin, *Nagaland*, 2; Kotwal, “The Naga Insurgency.”

⁶² Christoph von Furer-Faimendorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas: An Anthropologist's View of Nagaland 1936-1970*, New Edition (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1976), 1.

⁶³ According to J. H. Hutton, “Makhel,” which is “usually regarded as the place of division, not emergence.” See Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, 1.

Kohima, capital of Nagaland state, and located in Mao area, in the state of Manipur. The myths of the Angamis, Chakhesangs, Rengmas, Semas, Lothas, Tangkhuls, Somra Nagas, Maos, Marams, Thangals, Marings and also Meities indicate that Makhel or its adjacent areas as these tribes's original place.⁶⁴ The Zeliang tribes believe that their first ancestors emerged from the Japfu Mountain, which is located near Makhel, and from where they spread towards the South.⁶⁵ According to the legend of the Semas, the village Swemi or the hills of Japfu in the Angami area is the place of their origin.⁶⁶ The Aos believe that their forefathers came out of "Lung-terok or Lungthorok (meaning 'six stones' in 'Ao and also in Tankhul languages) at Chongliyimti which is at present in Sangtam area;" whereas "Noctes, Tangsas, Wanchos and Pakans trace their original migration to Burma."⁶⁷

The myths of origin might not literally mean the emergence of the Nagas' ancestors from the earth or stone, but they suggest one of the following assumptions: either all the Naga tribes, in spite of significant language and some socio-cultural differences among different groups, had common ancestry (many of the Naga tribes claim common ancestry⁶⁸), or in the antiquity the ancestors of different Naga tribes were living together as one group of people. In this regard one can suppose that in the remote past, on account of certain unknown reason/reasons, a calamitous social tragedy might have occurred, and that tragic incidence would have caused a deep division and enmity among different

⁶⁴ Vashum, *Nagas Right to Self-Determination*, 21.

⁶⁵ Alemchiba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, 20.

⁶⁶ M. Horam, *Naga Polity* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1975), 30.

⁶⁷ Asos Yunuo, *The Rising Nagas: A Historical and Political Study* (Delhi: Vivek, 1974), 39; also see J. P. Mills, *The Lhota Nagas* (London: Macmillan, 1922); Mills, *The Ao Nagas*; Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*; J. H. Hutton, *The Sema Nagas* (London: Macmillan, 1921); S. N. Majumdar, *Ao Nagas* (Calcutta: Silen Majumdar, 1925); Godden, "Naga and Other Frontier Tribes," 2.

⁶⁸ Chasie and Hazarika, *The State Strikes Back*, 1.

clans, family groups and segments of the ancient Naga society and dispersed them as different tribes into various locations in Northeast India and North-West Myanmar - the meaning of Ao (i.e. “those who came”) and Mirir (meaning “those who did not come”), for example, may suggest a clue of such division and dispersion to different locations in the past. According to Mills: “The name Ao is a current mispronunciation of Aor, their own word for themselves, meaning, according to their own statements, ‘those who came’ (i.e. across the Dikhu), as distinct from Mirir (‘those who did not come’), the term used for Sangtams, Changs, Phoms and Konyaks.”⁶⁹ From that given point of departure each Naga tribe may have developed its own language and socio-cultural pattern (distinct from another tribe) – Nagas speak more than 30 different languages and dialects that linguists classify “into ‘at least two, and possibly several, completely distinct branches of Tibeto-Burman’” language groups.⁷⁰ Also, there is another possibility in relation to the evolution of distinct Naga dialects and languages that: either they had developed different dialects for different socio-religious occasions before they were forced to split-up, or their original language had very limited words which in the course of time were replaced by new words and expressions.

Furthermore, the deep division and enmity, most apparently, gave way to constant warfare (between different tribal groups) and culture of headhunting. W. Robinson, concerning constant warfare among the Nagas, writes:

...the various tribes dispersed over the Naga Mountains are not only independent and unconnected, but engaged in perpetual hostilities with one another. Interest is not either the most frequent or the most powerful motive of their incessant

⁶⁹ Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, 1.

⁷⁰See Baruah, “Confronting constructionism,” 322; Burling, “The Tibeto-Burman Languages of Northeastern India,” 172; also see Elwin, *Nagaland*, 12-13.

hostilities. They must in a great measure be imputed to the passion of revenge, which rages with such violence in the breast of savages⁷¹

Hence, the Nagas' headhunting culture could have developed after the break-up of the original Naga society. This supposition is supported by the Naga story that in the beginning they

did not know how to make war. But one day a bird dropped a berry from a tree, and a lizard (*Shangkung*) and a red ant (*muritsu*) fought for it. A man who was watching saw the ant kill the lizard and cut off its head. So men learnt to take heads⁷²

The enmity that began at the time of tragic incidence, most apparently, made different Naga tribes deadly hostile to one another and they began to raid the villages of other groups/tribes and kill the victims and take their heads as trophy achieved through their bravery. As the time lapsed, headhunting, besides being an act of revenge and bravery, seemed to have gained socio-religious meanings and significance. Constant warfare between different tribes and headhunting culture, on the one hand, made the Nagas ferocious warriors/fighters who would defend their own (mostly village) society at all cost, and on the other, further deepened the enmity and suspicion between different tribal groups.

The earliest historical accounts of the Naga settlements are found in the Ahom Chronicles, known as the *Ahom Buranjis*, and the Royal Chronicles of Manipur. "The Ahoms," writes Barua,

belonged to Tai or Shan race, migrated to upper Assam through Myanmar in 13th Century. By subjugating the local kings and tribal chiefs, the Ahoms gradually established their rule over the whole of Brahmaputra Valley. The Ahom rulers had a deep sense of history. Under their patronage, the priests and the nobles

⁷¹ W. Robinson, "Naga Warfare," in *India's North-East Frontier in the Nineteenth Century*, 61; Robinson, *Descriptive Account of Assam*, 391.

⁷² Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, 200; Elwin, *Nagaland*, 11.

meticulously recorded the history of Ahoms from the earlier time to the end of their rule in the hand written tomes called 'buranjis'.”⁷³

According to Furer-Haimendorf, the *Ahom Buranjis* “record fierce fights as well as peaceful dealings with the inhabitants of numerous Naga villages.”⁷⁴ The earliest record, which dates back to the thirteenth century, narrates how Sukapha, the first Ahom king (who founded the Ahom kingdom in Assam in 1228 A.D.⁷⁵), conquered many Naga villages with greatest cruelty when he was travelling across the Naga country (through Burma) with his large army.⁷⁶ From the time the Ahoms established their rule over the Brahmaputra Valley the relationship between the Ahom rulers and the Nagas was mixture of hostilities and friendship.⁷⁷ It appears that the Nagas were never subjected under the direct rule of Ahoms, nor their country was ever made part of Ahom kingdom, although some Ahom kings considered Nagas as their subjects and took taxes from them.⁷⁸ Shihabuddin, the Mogul historian, who accompanied Mir Jumla's Assam expedition in 1662, wrote that even though most of the hill tribes of the neighbouring hills, most probably including the Nagas, paid no tax to the King of Assam, “yet they accept his

⁷³G. C. Barua, *Ahom Buranji: From the Earliest Time the End of Ahom Rule* (Guwahati: Spectrum, 1985), 3; Sajal Nag, *Contesting Marginality: Ethnicity, Insurgency and Sub-Nationalism in North-East India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2002), 28-30; Sandhya Barua, “Language problem in Assam,” in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 6, No 12 (July, 1978), 68-69.

⁷⁴ Furer-Haimendorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas*, 27.

⁷⁵ See S. P. Sinha, *Lost Opportunities: 50 Years of Insurgency in the Northeast and India's Response* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers & Distributors, 2007), 48.

⁷⁶ Furer-Haimendorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas*, 27; “According to the annals of the Ahoms, when the Ahoms invaded Assam in 1215 A.D. the different Naga tribes were settled in their different habitats, and from all that we can gather they were the same Nagas which the British found when they took possession of Assam several centuries later.” See W.C. Smith, *The Ao Naga Tribe of Assam* (London: Macmillan, 1925), xxi.

⁷⁷ Furer-Haimendorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas*, 28.

⁷⁸ S. P. Sinha asserts that the Ahoms isolated the Nagas for 600 years. See S. P. Sinha, Nagaland: The Beginning of Insurgency – II; available from <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/homeland%20security/Nagaland-The-Beginning-of-insurgency---II.html>; Internet accessed: 10August 2011.

sovereignty and obey some of his commands.”⁷⁹ Hence, from thirteenth to nineteenth centuries the relationship between the Nagas and Ahoms oscillated between hostility and friendship – at times they had very friendly and ruler-subject like relationship, and in other they clashed against each other, and the Nagas hunted heads of Ahom subjects. In spite of the fluctuating relationship the Ahom rulers never seemed to have attempted to subjugate the Nagas under the Ahom rule as other indigenous tribal groups (like Bodo and Mikir [now Karbi]) of Brahmaputra Valley.⁸⁰ Although historically it appears that there was no united Naga nation as such before the British occupation, the Nagas lived for thousands of years in their ancestral land with absolute freedom – they were the masters of their destiny and rulers of their ancestral land divided among different tribes, sub-tribes and clans;⁸¹ therefore, the Nagas’ aspiration to regain freedom cannot be a new idea or foreign construction, even though the concept of the united Naga nation may sound later invention.⁸²

V.4.2. British Occupation and Nagas’ State of Affairs

British conquest of Northeast (mainly Assam) region began from 1824,⁸³ the year in which the first Anglo-Burmese war concluded.⁸⁴ Although Assam occupation began from

⁷⁹ Quoted in Elwin, *Nagaland*, 19.

⁸⁰ According to S. P. Sinha, “Ahoms never tried to conquer the Nagas and amalgamate them in their kingdom but left them to live the way they liked.” Sinha, *Lost Opportunities*, 49.

⁸¹ Chasie and Hazarika affirm that the Nagas’ “is a fiercely independent history, with each village existing as an independent sovereign republic” Chasie and Hazarika, *The State Strikes Back*, 1.

⁸² In the view of Vashum “Self-determination of the Nagas is relatively modern concept [...] if there was anything as Naga nationalism, it was only in an incipient form.” See Vashum, *Naga’s Right of Self-Determination*, 5-6.

⁸³ According to Baruah and Sinha, the Anglo-Burmese war ended in 1826 following which British occupation of Northeast began. See Baruah, “Confronting Constructionism,” 325; Sinha, *Lost Opportunities*, 49.

⁸⁴ See Elwin, *Nagaland*, 19; Gordon P. Means and Ingunn N. Means, “Nagaland – The Agony of Ending a Guerrilla War,” in *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 39, No. ¾ (Autumn 1966 – Winter, 1966-67), 291

1824 the British, for a long time, did not show any intention to extend their authority over the Naga territory, because their main interest was to develop tea plantation on the plains and foothills.⁸⁵ However, from the early 1850s British were compelled to apply a policy of slow but positive control over the Naga inhabited area due to several deadly Naga raids (in which many people lost their lives) in the Assam valley.⁸⁶ Thenceforth British gradually extended their authority over the Naga territory. But, the control of the Naga territory did not mean an active or direct administration of the region, because the British strategy throughout was to leave the Nagas to themselves; therefore, the Nagas continued to manage by themselves their village organization and tribal council without any interference from the British government. Besides, the British administration endorsed the Inner Line regulations to protect the Nagas and their land from exploitation. According to Mackenzie, the British government introduced the Regulations to restrict the entry of both white planters and non-tribal Indians to protect the land, customs and traditions of the hill peoples.⁸⁷ It had twofold objectives: to protect the land of the Nagas from outside encroachment and to protect the people of Assam plain (mainly the tea garden owners and labourers) from the Naga raids.⁸⁸ Furthermore, exclusion of the Naga area from the active administration, on the one hand, protected the Nagas from outside influence and exploitation and gave them opportunity to continue to enjoy their freedom (except

⁸⁵ Atola Changri, *The Angami Nagas and the British 1832-1947* (Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1998), 29.

⁸⁶ See Elwin, *Nagaland*, 20-22.

⁸⁷ Mackenzie, *The Northeast Frontier of India*, 55-56; and A. Mackenzie, "Historical Prelude," in *India's North-East Frontier in the Nineteenth Century*, Edited by Verrier Elwin, Second impression (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 22.

⁸⁸ "On the one hand it prevented encroachment on tribal land; on the other, by checking irritations that might incite the tribesmen to rebellion and raids, it protected the tea planters and their labour." Elwin, *Nagaland*, 43, 44.

headhunting) under the British rule; and on the other, the British policy kept alive in them the awareness that they were not part of any other territory. Concerning British policy of seclusion of Nagas Maxwell writes:

‘British official laboured for a hundred years to ensure that Nagas should retain their racial characteristics and should not be reduced to the status of tribals in the plains [who are] regarded as untouchables to be exploited by money lenders and all of higher caste.’⁸⁹

If the British government adopted a policy of total integration and assimilation (a policy which the Indian and Hindu nationalists would have preferred British to implement with full force right after the occupation of Northeast region) with mainland India, then, the situation of Nagas would not be different from the tribal groups of the non-excluded and non-protected areas (mainly Tripura and present Assam) of Northeast India. Moreover, the policy of exclusion and isolation of the hill regions seems to have worked in the Nagas’ favour, therefore, there was no rebellion – except a semi-religious movement which was launched by Jadonang in Manipur hill area in 1931 – against the colonial rule from the time whole Naga inhabited Northeast region came under the control of British administration (except few clashes between some Naga tribes who were yet to give up their headhunting tradition).⁹⁰ The semi-religious movement of Jadonanga, a Kabui Naga (who was arrested and hanged), in the view of Reid, was in no sense a revolt against British rule.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Maxwell, *India and the Nagas*, 6.

⁹⁰ See Elwin, *Nagaland*, 24-31; Reid, *Years of Change in Bengal and Assam*, 108-109.

⁹¹ As per Reid’s report, “in 1931 trouble broke out because of a semi-religious [movement] launched in the hill portion of the State by one Jadonang, a Kabui Naga. Though Jadonang was soon arrested and hanged, the movement spread to neighbouring districts where it was kept going by Gaidiliu, a female disciple....” Later on Gaidiliu, too, arrested and imprisoned in Aijal (headquarters of Lushai Hills). Reid, *Years of Change in Bengal and Assam*, 111.

V.4.3. Role of Christianity in Collective Naga Identity

During the British period two major developments, that have lasting impact in the socio-religio-cultural and political spheres of the Nagas, took place. These developments were the conversion of the Nagas to Christianity and formation of collective Naga ethnicity and identity. Before they were converted to Christianity Nagas practiced a type of tribal religion (or animism),⁹² of which headhunting appeared to be one of the essential rituals. The Nagas, in the pre-Christian days, did not have shared ethnic identity as such, because they were divided into various distinct tribes that were constantly at war with one another. In those days Nagas would identify themselves by their given tribe or clan, not by the generic term “Naga.”⁹³ It was Christianity that helped them to gain the present unity and Naga ethnicity – after conversion to Christianity the Nagas gave up their tribal warfare (headhunting culture) that alienated them (different Naga tribes) from one another and, in the meantime, the Christianity generated a strong sense of common brotherhood (or blood-relationship) among all the Christianized Naga tribes. This is why Shimrey terms the conversion to Christianity of the Nagas as “a revolution in the Naga history.” “The message of the Gospel,” says Shimrey, “was the beginning of all things in Naga history.”⁹⁴

The process of Christianization of the Nagas (apparently Christianity is both individual faith and a vital part of cultural identity of the Naga society) was taken up by the American Baptist missionaries from the early 1840s, however, the first Naga conversion

⁹² See L. P. Vidyarthi and B. K. Rai, *The Tribal Culture of India* (Columbia: South Asia Books, 1977), 237ff; Elwin, *Nagaland*, 10.

⁹³ See Reid, *Years of Change in Bengal and Assam*, 107.

⁹⁴ Shimrey, *Let Freedom Ring*, 42.

took place in 1851 and from the 1870s the mission work gained momentum.⁹⁵ According to Gundevia, conversion commenced with the arrival of American Baptist Mission in 1872.⁹⁶ Christian missionaries not only preached the Gospel of Christ, but they opened schools to educate Naga youths and build hospitals.⁹⁷ The impact of Christian message combined with education and better health care was such that in little more than a century most of the Nagas of Nagaland became Christian. In the opinion of Richard Eaton Nagas' conversion to Christianity was second (only to that of Phillipines) most massive movement to Christianity in whole of Asia; therefore, at present almost ninety percent of the population of Nagaland is Christian⁹⁸ - most of the 10 percent is non-Naga population. When the Nagas became Christian they gave up their traditional belief and practices. Thus, Christianization effected social transformation in the Naga society and they gradually started to participate in the modern civilization. This is why Ashikho Mao thinks "Culturally Naga Hills became a colony of American Evangelism."⁹⁹ Even though the social change affected the traditional culture and customs of the Naga society, Christianity made them aware of their rights and it gave them unique social status and self-esteem among their neighbours.

⁹⁵ Frederick S. Downs, *Essays on Christianity in North-East India*, edited by Milton S. Sangma and David R. Syiemlieh (New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1994), 52; M. M. Thomas and R. W. Taylor (eds.), *Tribal Awakening* (Bangalore: Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1965), 159.

⁹⁶ Y. D. Gundevia, *War & Peace in Nagaland* (New Delhi: Polit, 1975), 42.

⁹⁷ See Srikanth and Thomas, "Naga Resistance Movement," 60.

⁹⁸ Richard M. Eaton, "Comparative History as World History: Religious Conversion in Modern India," in *Journal of World History*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1997), 245.

⁹⁹ Ashikho Dailo Mao, *Nagas: Problem and Conflict* (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1992), 160.

Nagas' conversion to Christianity, in the view of Baruah, was the single most important development that made collective identity possible.¹⁰⁰ Singh acknowledges that Christianity became a new process of modernization which stopped headhunting, led to the growth of literacy and development of better health care, and reduced tribal languages to writing.¹⁰¹ Hence, Christianity has become one of the most important parts of collective Naga ethnic identity in the present time.¹⁰² "Collective identities," according to Anna Bull,

can be defined as constituted by a shared and interactive sense of 'we-ness' (anchored in real or 'imagined' or 'simulated' attributes and experiences) associated with a collective agency [...] in terms of content, collective identities can be constructed around specific traits which are seen to distinguish one group from another – language, ideology, class, ethnicity or religion.¹⁰³

Thus, Naga Christianity and Naga ethnicity are inseparably intertwined, and any attempt to separate them may cause severe damage to the whole Naga social structure. Moreover, Naga Christianity began to become a vital organ of Naga collective ethnic identity before Indian independence; it is not that "the Naga conflict helped make Christianity a part of Naga identity,"¹⁰⁴ as suggested by Baruah. Christianity has played a major role in the growth of socio-political consciousness among the Nagas from the 1920s. Furthermore, it

¹⁰⁰ Baruah, "Confronting Constructionism," 328.

¹⁰¹ Singh, "North-East India," 261.

¹⁰² See Baruah, "Confronting Constructionism," 328; according to Sinha "Christianity gave the Nagas a sense of identity of 'more specifically a sense of separateness' from the plainsmen." Sinha, *Lost Opportunity*, 41. "A collective identity constructed around ethnicity," in the observation of K. Cordell, "emphasizes cultural difference and exclusion [...] Ethnicity appears to have become more prominent and more salient than other collective identities in contemporary societies." K. Cordell, "Introduction, aims and Objectives," in *Ethnicity and Democratisation in the New Europe*, edited by Cordell (London; Routledge, 1999); quoted in Bull, "Collective Identities," 43

¹⁰³ Anna Cento Bull, "Collective Identities: From the Politics of Inclusion to the Politics of Ethnicity and Difference," in *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 2, No. 3-4 (March/June, 2003), 42.

¹⁰⁴ Baruah, "Confronting Constructionism," 329.

has been the most important factor for the process of enlightenment, liberation (from Naga traditional customs and manners that divided them) and (socio-political) empowerment of the Naga tribes in the Northeast region.¹⁰⁵

V.5. Ethno-religious Apprehension and Aspiration for Independence

It is indicated earlier that the Nagas did not have friendly relationship with the people of Assam and other plains people of mainland India due to their socio-religio-cultural differences. They also did not have any good relationship with Hinduised Manipuris (Meiteis) who considered the Nagas and other hill tribes as “altogether lower creatures” because of their food habits and socio-cultural tradition.¹⁰⁶ The Hill tribes even today are considered by orthodox Hindus as low class human beings mainly because of the food they eat. Some of the food items (like fermented drinks, fermented meat, fermented beans or seeds, beef, pork, dog-meat etc.) which the hill peoples enjoy eating are totally unholy, disgusting and repugnant to Hindus (particularly high caste Hindus). In the meantime, most of the hill tribes (including the Nagas) of Northeast do not have caste system, whereas the Hindus and Hinduised Ahoms and Manipuries strictly practiced/practice caste hierarchy. From the time of Sankardev (15th and 16th centuries A.D.),¹⁰⁷ the most popular Vaisnavite saint of Assam, process of Hinduisation of some of the tribes living in the Assam plain and Manipur Valley began. Due to the process of Hinduisation some of the casteless Mongoloid tribes (like Dimasa Kacharis, Rava and Lalung) of Brahmaputra and Barak Valleys have been gradually converted to Hinduism and introduced into caste

¹⁰⁵ Barnes Mawrie, “Christianity and Socio-Political Consciousness in Northeast India,” in *Christianity and Change in Northeast India*, edited by T. B. Subba, Joseph Puthenpurakal and Shaji Joseph Puykunnel (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2006), 132; also see Elwin, *Nagaland*, 32-33.

¹⁰⁶ Reid, *Years of Change in Bengal and Assam*, 110.

¹⁰⁷ Singh, *Northeast India*, 260.

hierarchy. But, Hinduism could not make inroad into Naga country (and also Mizos' land), most probably, due to their exclusiveness, ferocity and head hunting culture. Nevertheless, it had very good prospect to infiltrate into these impenetrable areas after the British occupation of both the territories if these regions were not excluded from the direct administration and isolated from the mainland India. Though the British policy was not sympathetic toward Hinduising elements, the Nagas seemed to be happy with the political arrangement made to protect them and their territory.

However, in the late 1920s the Nagas perceived an impending danger to their socio-cultural system and to their territory when they came to know that the British was planning to make a series of political reforms in India in view of the rising anti-colonial mobilization. Therefore, in 1929 a strong delegation, representing various Naga tribes, of Naga Club submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission¹⁰⁸ demanding their hill areas to be excluded from the proposed reform scheme and to be kept under direct British administration. Furthermore, the memorandum asked the Commission to leave out the Nagas from any reform scheme and to give them freedom (or revert to their earlier status) when the British would leave India.¹⁰⁹ Various intellectuals may interpret this memorandum according to their scholarly wisdom and judgement, whereas only the Nagas of that time could tell us what they really felt when they realized that Naga country would be made a part of Assam or another territory in the near future. In regard to Nagas' fear Robert Reid, the then governor of Assam, expressed:

the inhabitants of the excluded Areas would not now ... be ready to join in any constitution in which they would be in danger or coming under the political

¹⁰⁸ See Baruah, "Confronting Constructionism," 328; Maxwell, *India and the Nagas*, 7; Simon Memorandum, 1929, "Memorandum of the Naga Hills to the Statutory Commission on Constitutional Reforms, Simon Commission," (January 10, 1929); M. Alemchiba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland* (Kohima: Naga Institute of Culture, 1970), 163-65.

¹⁰⁹ See Maxwell, *India and the Nagas*, 7.

domination of the Indians The people of the hills of Assam are as eager to work out their own salvation free from Indian domination as are the people of Burma and for the same reasons.¹¹⁰

A people which never had experienced lack of freedom, who recently started to realize their collective Naga ethnicity and identity and who did not have any good relationship with Hinduised or Hindu people were certain to perceive serious threat to their ethnicity and identity when they suddenly became conscious of the fact that their future was going to be in the hands of those who belonged to different race, religion and culture, and who considered them lower creatures. The fear of the Nagas (including Mizos and people of NEFA) were well understood by the British government when the Commission reported the concerns of these tribes. In 1935, the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act, as a result of which Naga Hills (including Lushai Hills, NEFA and North Cachar and Mikir Hills) became Excluded Area within the Assam Province.¹¹¹

Although Nagas were excluded from direct administration, according to the Government of India Act passed in 1935, their apprehension did not die down, because they were certain that British was leaving India soon. Then the Naga leaders tried to find political ways and means to safeguard their Naga ethnicity and identity (then intensely moulded together with Christianity even though only little more than half of the Naga population was Christian), but no political scheme seemed to have assured them a safe and protected socio-religio-political future within the post-Independent Indian state. Therefore, the Naga National Council (NNC – the offshoot of the Naga Club),¹¹² under the leadership of

¹¹⁰ Quoted in H. K. Barpujari, *North-East India: Problem Policies and Prospects* (Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1998), 8.

¹¹¹ See Elwin, *Nagaland*, 39; Maxwell, *India and the Nagas*, 7.

¹¹² In 1945 the Naga Hills Tribal Council was formed at the behest of C.R. Pawsey, then Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills District, to help in the relief and rehabilitation work. In April, 1946 it was converted into Naga

Angami Zapu Phizo, declared independence of Nagaland one day before (i.e. 14 August, 1947) India got independence. Most probably the question of declaration of independence for Nagaland would not have arisen if the Indian national leaders together with Naga leaders would have worked out reasonable and concrete political arrangement to resolve Nagas' concerns before India got independence. However, the post-independent Indian state neither recognized the independence declared by the NNC, nor appeared to have given due thought to the Nagas' real concerns. In the meantime, although the Indian government was against making any additional concession (except the autonomy within Assam), a nine-point agreement between the British appointed governor of Assam, Sir Akbar Hydari, and NNC was signed in 1948 after series of talks, under the preamble "the right of the Nagas to develop themselves according to their freely expressed wishes is recognized." The Article 8 of the nine-point agreement was the bone of contention for the Nagas. The Article 8 stated:

The Governor of Assam as the Agent of the Government of the Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of ten years to ensure the due observance of this agreement; at the end of this period, the Naga National Council will be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period, or a new agreement regarding the future of the Naga people arrived at.¹¹³

The NNC leaders interpreted the Article as

The Governor of Assam as the agent of the Government of India will have a special responsibility for a period of ten years to ensure the due observance of the Agreement at the end of the period the Nagas will be free to decide their own future.¹¹⁴

National Council (NNC) at "Wokha with the aim to carry out social and political upliftment of the Nagas." Elwin, *Nagaland*, 51-54.

¹¹³ Maxwell, *India and the Nagas*, 9.

¹¹⁴ L. Wati, *Facts and Growth of Naga Nationalism* (Mokokchung: 1993), 29.

Therefore, the Naga leaders took it for granted that the Article gave them the right to opt out of Indian union after 10 years; whereas, the Indian government “interpreted the agreement in the light that the Nagas had the freedom only to suggest revision of administrative pattern after ten years, an interpretation, which was unacceptable to the NNC.”¹¹⁵ Moreover, the Central government treated the nine-point agreement as a dead letter from the moment it was concluded, because the agreement was signed between the British appointed governor of Assam and NNC. Meanwhile, during the period of Indian independence the Nagas were given some assurances by Gandhi, Nehru and C. R. Rajagopalcharria (the Governor-General of India)¹¹⁶ that they had the right to determine their own future, but those assurances appeared to have no significance in practical level.¹¹⁷

V.6. Policy of the Indian State

From the early 1950s the NNC began Naga resistance movement. In the initial stage the Nagas resorted to peaceful forms¹¹⁸ of protest to compel the Indian government to fulfil their demand.¹¹⁹ However, the Indian government viewed the resistance as a law and order problem created by some misguided individuals like Phizo, therefore, the Assam government issued order to raid the houses of Phizo and other Naga leaders, and also banned the Naga newspapers.¹²⁰ During this time several NNC leaders went underground

¹¹⁵ Phanjoubam Tarapot, *Insurgency Movement in North-East India* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1999), 105; S. K. Chaube, *Hill Politics in N E India*, Reprint (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1999), 157.

¹¹⁶ See Maxwell, *India and the Nagas*, 9.

¹¹⁷ See Maxwell, *India and the Nagas*, 8-9.

¹¹⁸ Elwin says, “the NNC never officially approved a policy of violence.” Elwin, *Nagaland*, 55.

¹¹⁹ See Srikanth and Thomas, “Naga Resistance Movement,” 57.

¹²⁰ Srikanth and Thomas, “Naga Resistance Movement,” 62.

to evade arrest and harassment by armed forces. These Naga leaders, from their hideouts, continued to guide the Naga freedom movement to achieve Nagas' geopolitical goal. In 1952, the Nagas demonstrated their unity and their disobedience to the Indian state by boycotting the first general election of the independent India held in the same year.¹²¹ From this time the Naga unrest spread outside the Naga Hills. In 1953, the first violent incidence, owing to the Naga unrest, occurred in Tuensang, then part of NEFA.¹²² The Indian government, from the early 1950s, appeared to be determined to suppress the Nagas' freedom movement with the use of force – according to Lacina, “Initially, Delhi’s coercive response to the NNC was quite heavy-handed and the Center refused to negotiate with the rebel leadership.”¹²³ Therefore, the incidence of violence worked as a strong supporting evidence to use Indian armed forces against the Nagas. Thus, the Indian state, instead of settling the Naga problem through political dialogue, adopted hard-line policy by deploying armed personnel in the Naga area. Moreover, the Central government equipped its armed forces with special powers by enacting several “‘black’ laws such as the Assam Maintenance of Public Order (Autonomous Districts) Act 1953, The Assam Disturbed Areas Act 1955, Armed Forces (Assam, Manipur) Special Powers Act 1958 etc.”¹²⁴ The military tactics of the Indian government corroborated that it had perceived Naga freedom movement a great internal threat to the newly liberated Indian state; therefore, the situation was considered extraordinary condition which had to be dealt with extraordinary power – “perceived internal threats,” in the view of Margaret Blanchard,

¹²¹ See Elwin, *Nagaland*, 53.

¹²² Sinha, *Lost Opportunity*, 55; Elwin, *Nagaland*, 55.

¹²³ Lacina, “Does Counterinsurgency Theory Apply in Northeast India?,” 167.

¹²⁴ Srikanth and Thomas, “Naga Resistance Movement,” 63; Chasie and Hazarika, *The State Strikes Back*, viii.

“often have created far greater repressive reactions than when the nation is at war.”¹²⁵ Apparently mobilization of Indian armed forces into the Naga Hills was tantamount to declaration of war against the Nagas or invasion of the land of the Nagas. Hence, deployment of armed personnel (at one time Indian government stationed “between 40,000 and 50,000 soldiers to control a civil population of only about 300,000.”¹²⁶), equipping them with special power, not only escalated the Naga situation, but also seemed to have alienated the moderate section of the Nagas. This fact is acknowledged by Sinha, who was one of the senior officers during early stage of military operation in Naga Hills, in his book *Lost Opportunity*. He Writes:

The harsh measures taken by the army in the face of violent guerrilla attacks in the fifties contributed to the sense of separateness even among that section of Nagas, who favoured a peaceful settlement. When insurgency started in 1956 neither the political leadership nor the army had any experience in fighting insurgency. The then Army Chief, Gen K. S. Thimaya, is reported to have candidly told Nehru that it required political wisdom rather than military muscle to solve the Naga problem [...] It will serve no purpose to deny that in the initial stages there were wide spread violations of Human Rights and acts of vendetta in which innocent lives of civilians were lost and villages burnt. Torture to elicit information was quite common.¹²⁷

The military stratagem clearly demonstrated that the Indian government was acting as per the instruction of Hindu nationalists (*Jana Sangh*), who strongly suggested that “the Indian government should ‘brook no nonsense’ from any Nagas and it should not be afraid to use its economic and military power” to crush the Naga resistance.¹²⁸ In the meantime the Indian army, too, seemed to have followed hard-line position¹²⁹ on the

¹²⁵ See Margaret A. Blanchard, *Freedom of Expression, Fear and National Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); also see Chasie and Hazarika, *The State Strikes Back*, viii.

¹²⁶ Machael Scott, See *The Times* (London: May 31, 1966).

¹²⁷ Sinha, *Lot Opportunities*, 73-74.

¹²⁸ Means, “Cease-fire Politics in Nagaland,” 1019.

¹²⁹ See N. Bending Ao, *Efforts for Peace* (Kohima: Information and Publicity, 1968), 5-8.

Naga problem for which they required to be equipped with special powers to defeat the Naga resistance mercilessly. The hard-line policy of the Indian government reflect anti-minority attitude.

Nonetheless, the military tactics of the Indian state failed to achieve its goal; instead, it produced the first and long-lasting armed militancy in the post-independent Indian soil. Therefore, from the early 1960s the Indian government adopted policy of political negotiation with the moderate Naga leaders. The outcome of the political dialogue was 16-point agreement which was signed between the moderate Naga leaders and New Delhi. As per the agreement the present state of Nagaland came into existence in 1963 in spite of objection from Hindu nationalists – Hindus of “Madras warned that to grant statehood to the Nagas would set up a chain-reaction of similar demands throughout north-east India.”¹³⁰ Despite the formation of the state of Nagaland the Naga insurgency continued; and in the meantime, the Indian Government failed to implement all the terms mentioned in the agreement.¹³¹ One of the most sensitive issues is the inclusion of the Naga inhabited areas that fall within the states of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.¹³² This sensitive issue has created ethnic tension and violence between Nagas and other ethnic groups in Manipur and Assam. The boundary problem could have been solved at the time of Indian independence if the Indian national leaders would have taken the Naga situation considerately. Due to various complications the Naga problem does not look like going to end very soon.

¹³⁰ Maxwell, *India and the Nagas*, 13.

¹³¹ Means, “Cease-fire Politics in Nagaland,” 1015.

¹³² On Manipur boundary matter see Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontiers of Bengal* (Calcutta: Foreign Department Press, 1884). 101-108.

V.7. Naga Militancy

When the state repression increased the NNC formed Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN), also known as underground government of Nagaland in March 1956.¹³³ The FGN created its own army (Naga Home-Guards) of almost three thousand guerrillas,¹³⁴ who were trained and armed (with the weapons left behind by Japanese and Allied forces in the end of the World War II). According to Nirmala Nibedon, the NNC “began armed operations in 1956 with a strength of some 15, 000 guerrillas.”¹³⁵ Thus, the first armed-movement in the post-independent India began in Nagaland¹³⁶ (then Naga Hills District – an autonomous district council within Assam state) in 1956, under the leadership of Phizo. In the early stage of the Naga insurgency (i.e. from 1956 till the creation of the state of Nagaland) the Indian army appeared to have applied a brutal method to root out the militancy. During this time there were reports of wide spread violations of human rights (innocent people were tortured or killed, women were raped, villages were burned, and innocent people were denied justice) by army personnel.¹³⁷ The military strategy forced many innocent and educated young Nagas into the insurgency camps.¹³⁸ However, the Nagaland Baptist Church has been involved in peace mission to settle the Naga

¹³³ See Elwin, *Nagaland*, 56.

¹³⁴ Nirmala Nibedon, *Nagaland: The Night of the Guerrillas* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 2000). 63; quoted in Cline, “The Insurgency Environment in Northeast India,” 129.

¹³⁵ Sinha, *Lost Opportunity*, 56; Elwin, *Nagaland*, 57-58.

¹³⁶ The Naga insurgency began in 1956, but “a massive crackdown on NNC [Naga National Council – the offshoot of Naga Club] took place in 1953 when troops in large numbers moved by the Government of India into the Naga Hills.” “Insurgency and Peace Efforts in Nagaland,” available from http://www.edspindia.org/nagaland_insurgency.asp; Internet accessed: 10 October 2011; also see H. Srikanth and C. J. Thomas, “Naga Resistance Movement and the Peace process in Northeast India,” in *Peace and Democracy in South Asia*, Vol. 1, Issue 2 (2005), 62.

¹³⁷ See Sinha, *Lost Opportunity*, 74.

¹³⁸ See Gavin Young, “The Nagas – An Unknown War,” in *The Observer* (April 30, 1961 and May 7, 1961); Michael Scott, *The Nagas, India’s Problem – or the World’s* (London: Naga National Council, 1966), 30.

problem peacefully from the very beginning of the birth of insurgency. In spite of the collapse of Peace Commission (which was formed by the Church leaders of Nagaland in 1964) in 1966¹³⁹ the Church, moderate Naga elites and positive thinking Indian political pundits continued their peace effort to resolve the problem. The result of such endeavour was the Shillong Accord, signed by the representatives of NNC-Federal Government Nagaland and Government of India on 11 November 1975, at Shillong (Meghalaya).¹⁴⁰ After the Accord was signed a faction of the NNC cadres surrendered their arms and renounced violence, and for some time there was normalcy in Nagaland. This period of Naga insurgency can be called the first phase of militancy.

With a lull of about five years second phase of militancy began in Nagaland in 1980. A section of NNC denounced the Shillong Accord as “treason” and the NNC-FGN signatories of the Accord were declared as traitors.¹⁴¹ This group formed the NSCN on 2 February 1980 (under the leadership of Thuingaleng Muival, Isak Chisi Swu and Khaplang) and proclaimed a new “Government of the People’s Republic of Nagaland” with Swu as Chairman, Khaplang as Vice-chairman and Muivah as General Secretary.¹⁴² With the rise of NSCN the insurgency problem spread all over Northeast India. In April 1988 the NSCN, due to some internal feud, split into two groups (NSCN-Isak-Muivah or I-M and NSCN-Khaplang or K); since then, these two groups are sworn enemies of each other. Between the two groups NSCN (I-M) is stronger one and it is a well organized, well trained and well armed insurgent group in Northeast India. At present both the

¹³⁹ Means, “Cease-fire Politics in Nagaland,” 1021-22.

¹⁴⁰ See Sashinungla, “Nagaland: Insurgency and Factional Intransigence,” [Online article] available from <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume16/Article4.htm#>; Internet accessed: 10 August 2011.

¹⁴¹ Tajenyuba Ao, *The British Occupation of Naga Country* (Mokokchung: Naga Literature Society, 1993), 299.

¹⁴² Sashinungla, “Nagaland.”

groups are in ceasefire agreement with the Indian government, but their occasional intra-group fighting is going on. It is said that more NSCN (K) cadres have been killed by NSCN (I-M) than by Indian military. Besides these groups, the NNC still survives in Angami area, but it is split into two groups – NNC (A) led by Phizo's daughter Adino and NNC (K) under the leadership of Khadao Yanthan. According to Sinha,

Muivah group enjoys influence among Thangkhuls, Semas and Phoms in Zuneboto, Wokha, Ukhrul, Dimapur and Kohima, whereas Khaplang group among Konyaks and Aos in Tuensang, Mokokchung and Mon. In Angami and Chakesang areas the legacy of Phizo still lingers.¹⁴³

Hence, the Naga insurgency problem is the longest unresolved problem in India and one of the oldest in the world.

V.8. Naga Militancy: An Assessment

Though freedom has been the main objective of the Naga armed movement, the main underlying motivating factors have been Naga historical context and Naga ethno-religious identity. Moreover, for two reasons weight of religion in the inspiration of armed-insurrection cannot be underestimated. Firstly, religion (Naga Baptist Christianity), played vital role in creating the modern Naga ethnicity and identity, therefore, it is the most vital force that built unity in the midst of Naga diversity, and it seems to be the only force which could protect the Nagas' unity from any divisive machinery/machineries. Secondly, Christian Nagas were well aware of the danger to Christian minority due to increasing Hindu opposition and hostility¹⁴⁴ (these aspects are elaborated in the preceding chapter) against religious minorities on both religious and political ground - from the British period Christian community has been accused for "denationalisation and

¹⁴³ Sinha, *Lost Opportunity*, 67-68.

¹⁴⁴ See N. Minz, "The Impact of Traditional Religions and Modern Secular Ideologies in the Tribal Areas of Chota Nagpur," in *Religion & Society*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (1962), 51.

association with imperialism,” therefore, the community experienced various forms of discrimination,¹⁴⁵ the trend increased in the post-independent India. Such discrimination in the political sphere is made obvious by the government policy that schedule castes Christian converts are excluded from the benefits granted to Hindu and Sikh schedule castes.¹⁴⁶ If schedule caste Christians reconvert to Hinduism, then, they get the benefit. This policy, on the one hand, discourages conversion to Christianity and, on the other, encourages conversion or reconversion to Hinduism.¹⁴⁷ Besides, Hindu religious nationalists had frequently raised slogan against Christian missionaries,¹⁴⁸ because Christian missionaries were considered as the spies and agents of alien power. Therefore, fear of Naga Christians, that “within the Indian Union the religious freedom of a small Christian minority would be compromised,”¹⁴⁹ could have played very significant role in inspiring both the freedom movement and Naga armed uprising. According to P. and N. Means,

there can be no doubt that the rebel Nagas are a sincerely pious lot. By all accounts hymn singing and prayers constitute an important part of their daily routine in their jungle hideouts. The vice-president of the NFG, Mr. Mhiasi, was a preacher before joining the underground. Serving as chaplains for the Home Guards are many Baptist minister.¹⁵⁰

However, Naga insurgency is different from Sikh, Islamic and Hindu religious terrorism. There are three main reasons for the differentiation of Naga insurgency from other

¹⁴⁵ See Bhatti, “The Economic Background of the Christian Community,” 69.

¹⁴⁶ M. Thomas, *All-India Reporter* (Madras, 1953), 22; Quoted in Beaglehole, “Indian Christians,” 77.

¹⁴⁷ Beaglehole, “Indian Christians,” 77

¹⁴⁸ See “Christian Missionaries – We do not Want them anymore: An Arya Samaj Statement,” in *International Review of Missions* (July, 1937), 396.

¹⁴⁹ P. and N. Means, “Nagaland – The Agony,” 297.

¹⁵⁰ P. and N. Means, “Nagaland – The Agony,” 297.

religious terrorism in India. First, it is an armed insurgency which mainly targets armed personnel of Indian government. This point is attested by Colonel Ved Prakash, an army officer who was involved in military operation against the Naga and Mizo insurgents, in the following words:

A word of praise is due to the Naga and Mizo militants. Not only were they brave and doughty fighters, they observed a certain code of honour. They usually targeted uniformed men, soldiers and policemen, and seldom the civilians. Of course, the perceived 'informers' were indeed targeted.¹⁵¹

Second, its armed activity is strictly limited within the Naga inhabited territories that, it claims, belong to the Nagas historically. It may support other insurgent groups, as alleged by the Indian government, in the Northeast for the purpose of raising fund and diverting the attention of Indian military machineries. Third, although religion is one of the main factors in instigating Naga freedom movement, it does not seem to have any holy war ideology, as in the case of other religious terrorism, to inspire acts of terrorism to destroy and terrorise people of other religious faiths or take revenge on religious ground. In the meantime the Naga Church has been persistently involved in the establishment of peace in Nagaland and solution of the Nagas' geopolitical concern through peaceful means. The Shillong Accord was one of the outcomes of the relentless involvement of the Naga Christian leaders in peaceful settlement of the Naga issue. Therefore, the Naga militancy cannot be categorized as religious terrorism; it is an armed insurgency¹⁵² that aims to achieve Naga freedom and protect Naga ethno-religious identity.

¹⁵¹ Ved Prakash, *Terrorism in India's North-East: A Gathering Storm* (Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2008), 12.

¹⁵² For the difference between insurgency and terrorism see Archana Upadhyay, *India's Fragile Borderlands: The Dynamics of Terrorism in North East India* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009).

Hence, the case study in this chapter make it clear that the Naga insurgency (unlike Sikh, Kashmiri Muslim and Hindu religious terrorism) arise more from political and ethnic factors rather than specific theological or scriptural convictions.

V.9. Solution toward the Conflict Resolution

There are various suggestions postulated by different thinkers for the resolution of the Naga problem. Among the postulates economic and political solutions are given more importance. B. G. Verghese, an Indian journalist and policy thinker, proposed a non-territorial approach that would “strengthen the Naga way of life” and would not disturb the integrity of other states. In this regard he suggested formation of a Naga Regional Council that would allow Nagas of whole of Northeast India a say in the cultural matter of Nagas.¹⁵³ B. K. Roy, a noted anthropologist, proposed an institution modelled on the Sami Council where the Sami people living in Sweden, Finland and Norway are represented.¹⁵⁴ Bhattacharjee and Nayak suggest federal system, from the local level, that would ensure decision making power to different ethnic groups; so that all ethnic groups may feel that their socio-cultural-ethnic distinct identities are respected.¹⁵⁵ In the view of Kotwal more autonomy to the state and genuine economic and infrastructural development and better and new national and international trade routes might solve the problem.¹⁵⁶ No doubt the above-stated suggestions sound attractive, but they may solve only part of the Naga problem. To solve the Naga problem Indian government has to first gain the trust of the Naga people on the Indian state. In this regard the Central

¹⁵³ See Sanjay Hazarika, “of the Nagas, Regionalism and Power,” in *The Statesman* (New Delhi: April, 27, 2002).

¹⁵⁴ See Baruah, “Confronting Constructionism,” 336.

¹⁵⁵ See Bhattacharjee and Nayak, “Vicious Circle.”

¹⁵⁶ See Kotwal, “The Naga Insurgency.”

government needs to: recognize the unique historical background of the Nagas; officially acknowledge the past mistakes of the Indian government; demonstrate that the Constitutional rights of the ethno-religious minority communities are well protected from the Hindu religio-nationalists; implement every agreement it makes with the concerned party. Any negligence in the part of the government to fulfil its obligation might indicate that the government is not sincere or concerned, and could further aggravate the given situation.

The main obstacles in the solution of the Naga problem (including the Sikh, Kashmir and Hindu problems studied in the preceding chapters) appear to be communal factors – communalisation and religionization of politics, communal propaganda and communal rhetoric etc. Unless the detrimental communal factors are contained, the above-given problems will continue to deepen or expand. However, the Indian government alone cannot solve the problem; the majority of the people who do not support any form of violence need to come together and take a bold step to restrain communal elements from destroying the centuries old social fabrics of the Indian society. In this regard, the model proposed in the last chapter might be useful. Once the positive communal ethos is restored in the Indian society the militancy/terrorism/insurgency will not find their support base to expand their activities.

V.10. Conclusion

This case study underscores the following points: the Nagas possess unique history and this fact has not been plainly and openly recognized by the Indian government; Christianity played most significant role in creating the modern collective Naga ethnic identity, therefore, Christian religion is the vital part of the Naga society; the Naga

ethnicity, Naga Christianity and the land of the Nagas are profoundly interrelated, for this reason no outside threat to any one of them cannot be tolerated; the Nagas (because of their culture and tradition) had been looked down upon by the Hindus (or their Hinduised neighbours) for which they did not have good relationship with them.

The Nagas began to perceive a serious threat to their collective ethno-religious identity and to their freedom from the pre-independent period; meanwhile, the Indian leaders could not assure the Nagas that their ethno-religious identity, their unique history and their freedom would be protected in the post-independent India. If the Indian leaders would have considered the Naga concerns seriously and sympathetically in the beginning of Indian independence and created a separate autonomous state integrating all the Naga inhabited areas within it, then, the present crisis might not have taken birth. Instead the Indian government attempted to impose its rule on the Nagas by demonstrating its military might as suggested by Hindu communalists and nationalists, who were not in favour of showing any concern to a few hundred thousand minority religious hill people. The military tactics of Indian state against the Nagas seemed to have signified neo-colonisation of the Nagas. It indicated that the Indian government was forcing the Nagas to submit to the dictates of the Indian state or face dire consequences. Furthermore, the policy put the Nagas in such situation that, either they had to quietly submit themselves to the dictates of the rulers and risk their ethno-religious identity and freedom or had to rise up and fight for their right – latter one was the best choice for the extremist faction of the Nagas. In the meantime, Hindu religio-nationalist factors (analysed in the previous chapter) could have emboldened the extremist Naga faction that was determined to start armed movement for their freedom and identity. Thus, the Nagas ethno-religious apprehension and historical and geo-political concerns gave rise to the oldest armed

insurgency in India. Although the Naga problem appears to be complicated one, there are possibilities to solve it in a peaceful way. Solution of the Naga problem should not be measured in number or size, but the uniqueness has to be given prominence. At present more important is to gain the trust of the Nagas on the Indian state. To do that the Indian state has to prove that the government is sincere in fulfilment of any agreement it makes with the Nagas. There have been some lapses in the past which need to be corrected.

The following chapter will present a comparative reflection on religious terrorism on the basis of the case studies done on the second, third, fourth and fifth chapters. However, the Naga insurgency might not fit in entirely in the comparative reflection because, the Naga insurgency cannot be categorised (as indicated earlier in this chapter) as religious terrorism.

CHAPTER VI

COMPARATIVE REFLECTION ON RELIGIOUS TERRORISM IN INDIA

VI.1. Introduction

In each case of religious terrorism in India there seems to be common ideological elements: the apprehension that religious or ethno-religious identity is in grave danger; the perception that the modern idea of secular nationalism is incompatible in religious, moral and socio-economic affairs.¹ In the meantime, there is a common awareness that the secular state is biased to particular religious group or groups and it is not doing enough to safeguard the religio-political rights of every religious community; as a result, the secular state is envisaged as an adversary by both the majority and the minority religious communities. Therefore, religion has become the prominent ideology of protest. Religious actors of the given faith communities have marshalled religious texts and symbols: to address regional as well as national social, economic and political issues; and to resist the modern secular system, secular state, supporters of the secular-political structure, and perceived threats of religious plurality. Subsequently, religio-nationalist actors of the conflicting religious communities have skilfully fused together spiritual with the historical, socio-political and economic grievances, tensions and experiences of many people of each of the concerned parties. Hence, depiction of war between truth/light and evil/darkness (found in every religion) in both personal and cosmic level is being skilfully portrayed by religious specialists as both spiritual and physical or internal and external battle against the forces of evil.

In this chapter I would like to make a comparative reflection on religious terrorism in India. In this regard it is necessary to assess the following factors: correlation between sacred and secular and importance of geo-political territory in the survival of religious or ethno-religious

¹ Cp. Mark Juergensmeyer, "Is Religion the Problem?", Levinson Lectures, Centre on Religion and Democracy (University of Virginia, November 7/2003), in *Hedgehog Review*, vol. 6, No. 1 (Spring, 2004), p. 6.

identity; common ideological component; religious nationalism; ethno-religious conflict; and religious concept and techniques of religious terrorism.

VI.2. Interconnection between Sacred and Secular

From antiquity religion has been playing indispensable role in both sacred and secular aspects of Hindu, Sikh, Islamic and Naga tribal societies. In India, before the establishment of British colonial rule, kingdoms and societies were governed by religious laws. In the socio-political system of those days spiritual and temporal were inseparable from one another. Kings, chieftains and rulers of the temporal kingdoms were regarded either as divine incarnation or divinely ordained authorities on earth² – On divinity of Hindu Kings Washburn Hopkins opined that kings became divine by virtue of a religious ritual, in which the mere human beings by “consecration and baptism at inauguration” assumed a divine nature.³ Religious authorities (such as Brahmins, priests, gurus, mullahs and imams) exercised extensive powers and functions in the mundane matters, because religious and mundane affairs were blended together; in other words, church and state were like one unit. Though far-reaching socio-political changes had taken place during the British and post-independent periods religion and religious actors continued to exercise significant authority over the sacred and secular life of the given religious societies.⁴

Each religion, in India, has to be viewed from vertical and horizontal perspectives. Vertically religion connects the Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Naga Christian societies to their ultimate

² See J. Goda, “Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View,” in *Numen*, Vol. 3, Fasc. 2 (January, 1956), 36f; Jean Lyon, *Just Half a World Away* (New York, 1954), 253.

³ E. Washburn Hopkins, “The Divinity of Kings,” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (December 1931), 309.

⁴ “But while churning out hundreds of thousands of geeky graduates, India does remain a country as seemingly attached to gods and goddesses as it was two thousand years ago.” Angela Saini, “The God Confusion,” in *New Humanist*, vol. 126, issue 2 (March/April 2011), available from <http://newhumanist.org.uk/2500/the-god-confusion>; Internet accessed: 4 May 2012.

reality, their ancestors, their mythical golden-age and history; horizontally religion endows a distinctive identity to each of these communities, binds together different individuals, groups and factions within the given unit, and requires every individual of the community to conform to its established religious principles and venerate and protect the given sacred spaces and territory. In Native American religion, according to Joel Martin, the spirituality is fused with “place and practice”. When we “talk about Hopi religion,” Martin writes, we

must talk about blue corn. One thing always leads to another and another when land, religion and life “are one”.⁵

Similarly, when we speak about Hindu, Sikh, Kashmiri Muslim and Naga Christian religions we have to talk about their geo-political territories; in other words, religion, land and life of the Hindu, Sikh, Kashmiri Muslim and Naga Christian societies are deeply interconnected. Therefore, the land represents both invisible/spiritual and physical cosmos that ascertains perpetual relationship with divinity, ancestors and community. For Hindus whole Indian territory is the body of divine mother, and the relationship between the divine-mother and Hinduism-and-Hindu race is believed to be eternal; for Sikhs Punjab is the cradle of Sikhism, for which the territory is both holy and unique; the land of Kashmir symbolizes the glorious period of Islamic expansion and Muslim rule in the Indian subcontinent, at the same time, it is dotted with sacred shrines of *pirs* and historical mosques, therefore, Kashmiri Muslims consider themselves as a “Chosen People” and the land as “the Promised land;”⁶ Naga inhabited territory stands for microcosm and macrocosm for the Nagas, because it is the place of their origin, tribal division, religious transition and Naganess (Naga unity, ethnicity and identity). Religion and geo-political territory, for the above-mentioned reasons, play very vital

⁵ Joel W. Martin, *The Land Looks After Us: A History of Native American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), x.

⁶ Robert G. Wirsing, *India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Dispute: On Regional Conflict and its Resolution* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1994), 127.

role in the (both spiritual and every-day) life of the Hindu, Sikh, Muslim and Naga Christian societies in India. Hence, protection and preservation of both the aspects is sheer necessity for each community.

However, although religious boundary appeared to be explicable the geo-political boundaries remained indecisive, for which hostility between the competing communities became inevitable. From the dawn of Indian independence Hindu majority has been claiming an absolute right of the Hindus over the whole territory – within which fall Naga, Sikh and Muslim territories; besides, they have been accusing Christians and Muslims for encroachment of Hindu religious boundaries by employing their missionary tactics. The *Khalsa* Sikhs, in the meantime, have indicted Hindus for infiltrating into Sikh socio-religious and geo-political boundaries through various socio-political means. Likewise Kashmiri Muslims and Naga ethno-religious societies have perceived Hindu threat to their land and religion from the pre-independent period. Thus, the common conception, that both religion and land is in danger, seemed to have caused a concrete vertical division between the majority and the minority communities from the beginning of Indian independence – this division was further reinforced in the late 1970s due to various socio-religio-political factors assessed in the preceding chapters. In the meantime, because of the Indian state's failure to fulfil their religious and geo-political expectations, the state has been suspected by these religious communities as being biased to one particular religious group. As a result, both the majority and the minority communities envisaged a serious threat to the foundation (religion and geo-political territory) of their existence and identity; therefore, it became a pressing need for the religious and religio-nationalist leaders of the concerned religious communities to take the matter of safeguard of their geo-political boundaries and religious or ethno-religious identity on their own shoulders. In this regard religious texts and symbols that depict cosmic battle

against forces of evil were proficiently manipulated: to motivate and mobilize the concerned religious constituencies; and to justify any form or extent of religious violence against, so-called, enemies.

VI.3. Common Ideological Component

Observations in the preceding chapters elucidate that in each case of religious terrorism in India there is a common ideological component, i.e., the understanding that modern secular nationalism is not sufficient in moral, socio-religious, economic and political aspects; because the spirit of nationalism rises beyond the loyalties to religious traditions and attachment to one's family, society or community, ethnic group and territory. It is a "form of 'political religion,'" says Smith, whose tensions with traditional religions have led to a growing politicisation of religion, as well as the messianisation of politics."⁷ Political religion is concerned with the social and political order. It tends to sacralise certain aspects of socio-political life by means of public rituals and collective ceremonies. In this regard, political beliefs and behaviour obtain a "religious" aspect. Thus, political religion could be regarded as a belief system or a surrogate religion that expresses the identity of a collectively. The political religion, like different types of secular ideologies, may attempt to impose "group identity to legitimize an existing political order, by injecting a transcendental dimension of a religious gloss on the justification."⁸

The secular nationalism, in the view of the Hindu religio-nationalists, does not give due importance to the religio-political rights of the dominant Hindu majority; it, rather, grants

⁷ Smith, "The 'Sacred' Dimension of Nationalism," 792; See Ramesh Thakur, "Ayodhya and the Politics of India's Secularism: A Double-Standards Discourse," in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 33, No. 7 (July, 1993), 647.

⁸ Marcela Cristi, *From Civil to Political Religion: The Intersection of Culture, Religion and Politics* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001), 3.

more rights and privileges to the minority communities.⁹ Therefore, Hindus have been vigorously working towards transformation of India into a Hindu nation, in which Indian (Hindu) society, instead of relying on modern western secular ideas, would draw most of its governing principles from the ancient Hindu traditions.¹⁰ The (*Khalsa*) Sikhs too apprehend a serious danger from the Indian secular nationalism because, on the one hand, the secular Indian state is being regarded as Hindu biased and, on the other, the western model of secular ideology allegedly threatens to swallow-up the traditional Sikh religion by introducing many young Sikhs to modern life-styles that pollute the moral and spiritual life of the Sikh people and make them neglect their visible *Khalsa* symbols as well as day-today religious duties and obligations.¹¹ Consequently, the (*Khalsa*) Sikhs aim to establish an independent Sikh state in which “Religion and State will not be separated; rather all aspects of life will be regulated according to divine commands as preserved in the Sikh faith.”¹² Likewise, for the Indian Muslims (particularly Kashmiri Muslims) secular nationalism is un-Islamic, because it goes against the will of God and his authority;¹³ for this reason, liberation (of Kashmir) and establishment of Islamic law in Kashmir became paramount necessities for Muslims of

⁹ Malik and Vajpeyi, “The Rise of Hindu Militancy,” 317.

¹⁰ See B.D. Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Origins and Development of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 6. “Among Hindus the idea has been gaining ground since the early 1980s that they alone are loyal to India while the religious minorities want to break up the Indian state and form independent separate states. Consequently the idea of a Hindu nation has been put forward as a replacement for the nation of a composite secular Indian nation” Ishtiaq Ahmed, “Religious Nationalism and Sikhism,” in *Questioning the Secular State: The Worldwide Resurgence of Religion in Politics*, edited by David Westerlund, 4th impression (London: C. Hurst & Company, 2002), 260.

¹¹ See Chapter II of this thesis for further clarification.

¹² Ahmed, “Religious Nationalism and Sikhism,” 278-279.

¹³ See Yoginder Sikand, “The Emergence and Development of the Jama’at-i-Islami of Jammu and Kashmir (1940s-1990),” in *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 36, no. 3 (July, 2002), 707.

Kashmir.¹⁴ Meanwhile, Indian secular nationalism, for the Nagas, is pro-Hindu (that threatens to submerge the Naga Christianity into the ocean of Hinduism) and anti-Christian.¹⁵ Hence, the secular nationalism – particularly to the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims – is not only a foreign/Western product which dissects state and religion and places secular above religious matters, but connotes “antireligious or suprareligious”¹⁶ import.

VI.4. Religious Nationalism

Although “nationalism has historically been a predominantly secular phenomenon,” with the resurgence of religious movements in the late 1970s, “religion and nationalism have been revived as potent forces”¹⁷ and they have allied together in India and other parts of the world, giving rise to a strong wave of religious nationalism. In India the root of (particularly Hindu and Muslim) religious nationalism could be traced back to the early twentieth century – during this time the Muslim and Hindu religio-nationalist movements (such as the Muslim League, the Hindu *Mahasabha* and the RSS) were organized.¹⁸ However, in the late 1970s, due to the religious resurgence and certain political developments, religious nationalism became a formidable force. In India an alliance between nationalism and religious nationalism became possible because, the national identity of the Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Naga Christian societies has been predominantly strengthened and permeated by their religious beliefs and practices. In the case of these societies their religious beliefs and

¹⁴ For further clarification see Chapter III.

¹⁵ For further clarification see Chapters I & V.

¹⁶ Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (California: University of California Press, 1993), 13.

¹⁷ Gerard Delanty and Patrick O’Mahony, *Nationalism and Social Theory: Modernity and the Recalcitrance of the Nation* (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 150.

¹⁸ For further clarification see Chapter IV.

practices “shape and inspire the national identities and nationalisms,” and lend “power and depth which serves to ground the inter-state order in the ‘will of the people’ in ways that democratic practices often fail to do.”¹⁹ The activists of the Hindu, Islamic and Sikh religious nationalism, to use Juergensmeyers’ words, “are waging popularist struggles against Western culture and its political ideology, and they aim at infusing public life with indigenous cultural symbols and moral values.”²⁰ Religious nationalism has become the cause of militant Muslim nationalism, militant Hindu nationalism,²¹ militant Naga ethno-religious nationalism and militant Sikh nationalism in India. Therefore, this phenomenon has been increasingly challenging the secular national identity in India by rekindling extreme forms of religio-nationalism.

Furthermore, to the supporters of Hindu, Muslim or Sikh religio-nationalism, secular nationalism has failed “not only because its institutions and leaders have disappointed them but also they have ceased to believe in it.”²² They cease to believe in it mainly because: secular nationalism and secularization are in alliance, and such alliance makes it non-traditional; therefore, it is a threat to the traditional religion, culture, society and geo-political attachments. Meanwhile, the party politics, party interests and use of religion for political purposes by secular political parties (mainly the Congress Party) weakened the Indian secular nationalism and gave way to increasing degree of (mainly Hindu) communal politics in India from the late 1970s. This political development seems to have further confirmed the

¹⁹Smith, “The ‘Sacred’ Dimension of Nationalism,” 792.

²⁰ Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?*, xiii.

²¹ Delanty and O'Mahony, *Nationalism and Social Theory*, 151.

²² Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War*, 24.

conception that Indian secular nationalism is predisposed to particular religious community/communities.

VI.5. Ethno-religious Nationalist Conflict

The term ethnic is used here in its broader sense, i.e., “race, language, religion, tribe,” culture and caste. “This is the sense,” to use the words of Ashutosh Varshney, “in which the term is widely understood in popular discourse, both in India and elsewhere.”²³ Ethno-religious-nationalism is ethno-religious-democracy, the project of fashioning a territory or a state around a dominant ethno-religious core.²⁴ Therefore, there is every possibility for the ethno-religious-nationalism to take “the more radical form of the expulsion or marginalization of national minorities” by severely discriminating and denying their right of citizenship.²⁵ Ethno-religious-nationalist conflict is a violent (often brutal form of violent) confrontation between different ethno-religious groups that share the same state, but not the same ethno-religious and cultural identity.²⁶ Seemingly religion, culture and geo-political issues are the most important aspects for such discrimination.

In India modern Hinduism has been projected as the mega-ethno-religious-nationalism by the supporters of Hindu religio-nationalism through their Hinduisation projects²⁷ – such as,

²³ Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (London: Yale University Press, 2002), 4.

²⁴ See Delanty and O'Mahony, *Nationalism and Social Theory*, 149.

²⁵ Delanty and O'Mahony, *Nationalism and Social Theory*, 149.

²⁶ Compare Daniel Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). Quoted in Anamaria Dutceac, Globalization and Ethnic Conflict: Beyond the Liberal – Nationalist Distinction,” in *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, vol. 3, no. 2 (January 2004), 23.

²⁷ Savarkar, aimed “for a religio-cultural amalgamation based on Hindu identity and ideals.” Hindu religio-cultural nationalism required the allegiance of a mass actively aware of their religio-cultural identity. See Amalendu Misra, *Identity and Religion: Foundations of anti-Islamism in India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd., 2004), 153.

popularization of Vedic religion and culture, establishment of national and international Hindu socio-religious and religio-political organisations for Hindu unity and for defence of Hinduism from outside attack, spread of Hindi language in *devanagari* script, their claim that all non-Muslims and non-Christians are Hindus, and Hindu intellectuals' hypothesis that Hindu is a race (therefore a people) and Hinduism a religion and a culture.²⁸ It is the mega-ethno-religious-nationalism because more than four-fifth of the population of India is Hindu. The ultimate aim of this nationalism is to make India a Hindu *rashtra*, which will be governed by Hindu religious laws and in which only Hindus will have the supreme right. However, in spite of Hindus being dominant majority the supporters of Hindu ethno-religious-nationalism have failed to realize their goal till now, mainly due to: the supporters of secularism and secular nationalism; and Muslim and Christian ethno-religious minorities. The mega-ethno-religious-nationalists, most probably, did not anticipate any threat to their religio-nationalistic scheme from other ethno-religious minorities because; they were regarded and included (in the Indian Constitution) as various forms of Hinduism. Whereas, Hindu-Muslim and Hindu-Christian relationship began to strain from the early nineteenth century due to various socio-religious and political occurrences (that are assessed in the case studies), and gave rise to Hindu religious antagonism against the minorities. From the time of partition of the British India (on religious ground) the Hindu hostility, particularly against the Muslim minority, took a serious turn. Moreover, political and religious developments (such as failure of the said Hindu mega project, granting of equal religious rights and privileges to the minorities in the Indian Constitution, alleged missionary activities of the minorities, demands for autonomy/independence of Jammu and Kashmir and Naga Hills or Nagaland by the Kashmiri

²⁸ See Craig Baxter, *The Jana Sangh: A Biography of an Indian Political Party* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969), 31. According to Savarkar, Hindus "were a valorous race." Misra, *Identity and Religion*, 153.

Muslims and the Nagas, and Naga militancy against the Indian state) from 1950 to the late 1970s posed a grave threat to the mega-ethno-religious monopoly, domination and ideals.

Besides, the Sikhs of Punjab launched their religio-political movement, right after the independence, demanding recognition of Punjabi language (in Gurmukhi script) and separate state for the Sikhs of Punjab. Apparently the main motive behind the Sikh religio-political movement was separation and safeguard of Sikh ethno-religious identity from Hinduism; but, to preserve distinct Sikh identity land and Sikh (*Khalsa*) religious-culture were vital factors. However, the Sikh movement not only vertically divided the Sikhs and Hindus of Punjab in communal lines, but challenged the religious domination of the Hindu majority. Such religio-political action of the Sikh ethno-religious group was certain to provoke Hindu discrimination against the Sikh community over which Hinduism exercised its monopoly.

Thus, the Muslim, Sikh and Naga Christian ethno-religious minorities, by demanding territorial autonomy/separation and religious rights and privileges, dared to attack the “religious wall”²⁹ of the Hindu majority and posed a serious threat, as assumed by Hindus, to Hinduism.³⁰ Moreover, in addition to constant problem of Naga separatist movement in Northeast India (from 1956) there began Sikh militancy in the Punjab (in the early 1980s) and Islamic militant movement in Kashmir (in the late 1980s). In the meantime, these minorities managed to garner some external (Pakistani and Chinese) support in the struggle for achievement of their religious and geo-political objectives.³¹ The Sikh and Islamic militants through their separatist and violent activities not only challenged Hindu domination and

²⁹ Fox, “Religious Causes of Discrimination,” 427.

³⁰ Ahmed, “Religious Nationalism and Sikhism,” 260.

³¹ Ethno-religious discrimination takes a severe form when the ethno-religious minority gets outside support from either a foreign government or a kindred group. See Fox, “Religious Causes of Discrimination,” 427f.

monopoly, but appeared to have made mockery of Hindu pride and Hindu masculinity. Consequently, the Muslim, Sikh and Christian minorities added more hatred to the already existing Hindu religious antagonism, and incited ruthless form of Hindu religious discrimination as a response to the challenge and contempt. Such ruthless form of religious discriminations against the minorities were being demonstrated in the brutal violence against Sikhs in 1984, in the communal violence following the Ayodhya incidence, in the Gujarat pogrom against Muslims, in the communal violence against Christians in Orissa, and in Malegaon and Hyderabad bombing incidents – these are some of the examples of the acts of religious terrorism performed by activists of the mega ethno-religious community against the Muslim, Sikh and Christian minorities.

Furthermore, the ethno-religious-nationalist conflict, in the case of India, takes the form of a vicious cycle because of disproportionate religious demographic formation in different regions in India. Although Muslims are minority in India, they are dominant majority in Jammu and Kashmir; likewise, Sikhs are majority in the state of Punjab; whereas, Hindus are minority in these states. Therefore, any form of anti-minority activity of Hindu community within or outside the minority dominated states could provoke violent discrimination against Hindus living in these states. In addition, disregard to the long-standing Sikh religio-political concerns and issues by Hindu dominated Indian state, on the one hand, and Hindu domination over the Sikh religion, on the other, were perceived as Hindu discriminations against the Sikh ethno-religious community; consequently, from the early 1980s Sikhism nurtured Sikh religious extremism, and Sikh militants embarked on violent/terrorist activities against the Indian state and the Hindus in Punjab and Haryana.³² Likewise, Islam in Kashmir (apparently because of the socio-historical-political grievances and Hindu religious violence against the

³² See case study on Sikh religious terrorism in chapter II in the thesis.

Muslims in other parts of India) gave birth to Islamic militancy which (besides its armed activities against the Indian state) started terrorist violence against the Hindu pundits in Kashmir from the very beginning. In the meantime, the terrorist activities of the Sikh and Muslim religious extremists against the Hindus in Punjab and Kashmir might have indicated to the Hindu mega ethno-religio-nationalist-extremist elements (such as the RSS and its affiliate militant organizations) a further and serious attack on the Hindu religious wall by the religious minorities; subsequently, the Hindu-religious-extremist elements, in response, began to motivate more ruthless form of Hindu discrimination against the (Muslim, Sikh and Christian) minorities in the Hindu dominated states from the 1980s – the violent incidents cited in the case studies on Hindu religious terrorism³³ corroborate this argument.

Moreover, some of the violent incidents (such as Gujarat pogrom and Orissa violence) reviewed in the case studies strongly suggest that, in the vicious cycle of ethno-religious-nationalist conflicts episodes of ruthless religious violence are systematically planned and executed to terrorise and annihilate the targeted enemy community/communities. In this regard the case study in the fourth chapter indicates that in certain cases events of violence are invented or created with an objective of mobilizing wider religious constituency against the enemy ethno-religious community/communities. However, planning and execution of such systematic annihilation might only be possible in those states where one community is dominant majority and, at the same time, both central and state governments are headed by communal political party/parties that favours/favour the dominant majority – the Gujarat pogrom was facilitated by both the factors (religious demographic formation and control of political power in the Centre and the state by Hindu communal parties). Gujarat incidence, though one of its kind, is the reminder of a looming danger of ethno-religious-nationalist

³³ See Chapter IV for explanation on Hindu religious terrorism.

conflict. Besides, because of the huge imbalance between Hindu population and Muslim/Christian/Sikh population and increasing religious antagonism among the conflicting communities, the vicious cycle of ethno-religious-nationalist conflict appears to be an ever revolving process of complicated problems that constantly inspire, empower and embolden the religious extremist elements in each case of religious terrorism in India. Although ethno-religious conflict may occur occasionally in violent form, seemingly religious discrimination, religious prejudice and apprehension (that at any time and for any reason brutal religious violence may take place) are rampant among members of conflicting communities – particularly in those states where one or another conflicting religious community is small minority. There is every possibility that at any time radical religious actors and extremist ethno-religio-nationalist elements might activate large-scale religious violence (like Gujarat and Orissa violence) by manoeuvring the prevailing religious prejudices and apprehensions, and further broaden the relationship gap between the conflicting communities in wider circle. Hence, the vicious cycle of ethno-religio-nationalist conflict is one of the most probable and potential factors for sustenance and intensification of religious terrorism in India.

VI.6. Religious Concept and Techniques of Religious Terrorism

There seems to be common assumption that the enemies are after the total elimination of the divine ordained religion, therefore, it is a war between the truth and evil, justice and injustice, and righteousness and unrighteousness. As a result the secular issues and concerns (such as historical, social, economic and geo-political) are skilfully fused together with spiritual aspects and given religious interpretations and meanings by radical religious specialists and religio-nationalist actors of conflicting communities, to stir or instil inner passion for violence among the members of the concerned religious community in the battle against the conceived enemies. In this regard the most appealing and spiritually invigorating religious ideology in

each case of religious terror seems to be the concept of holy war or *dharma yudha*. Arguably the concept of holy war (holy violence or cosmic battle) infuses the spirit or will to be more violent, because the physical world is regarded as battle field where followers of each concerned religious faith have to fight against the forces of evil to safeguard the divine ordained religious truth. “Concepts of cosmic war,” says Juergensmeyer,

have been employed in this-worldly social struggles. When these cosmic battles are conceived as occurring on the human plane, they result in real acts of violence.³⁴

Imageries of ongoing war between light and darkness and truth and evil are found in every religion. The imageries of divine warfare, observes Juergensmeyer,

are [...] not new but are a part of the heritage of religious traditions that stretch back to antiquity, and abundant examples of warfare may be found in sacred texts.³⁵

The battles between the forces of Rama and Ravana and Pandavas and Kauravas narrated in *the Ramayana* and *the Mahabharata* respectively played powerful role in inciting Hindu communal violence against Muslim and Christian minorities; the concept of *miri-piri* and symbol of the establishment of the *Khalsa Panth* were manipulated by Sikh radical preachers (particularly Bhindranwale) to instigate Sikh religious terrorism against non-*Khalsa* Sikhs, Hindus and the Indian state; apparently the concepts of jihad and India as “the house of war” played dynamic role in instigating holy war against Hindus and the Indian state in Kashmir. Thus, the symbol of holy war seems to be more inspiring than other religious imageries and teachings in the motivation and mobilization of each concerned religious constituency for religious terror against the supposed enemies. The idea of holy war or *dharma yudha* works as a magical charm which can allure thousands of young people from all walks of life into the fold of religious terrorism and infuse a violent and strong determination to do or die for the

³⁴ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 10.

³⁵ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 149.

sake of religion and land (the interrelated factors); therefore, they can mercilessly perform any form of brutal terrorist activities against the assumed enemies (see case studies for further clarification). “The term” holy war, says James Turner Johnson,

has the power to fire the blood, to cause passions to surge, to pump new life into otherwise dormant causes; conversely, the foreboding instilled by a threat of holy war can make the blood run cold and render the prudent timid.”³⁶

Furthermore, the concept of holy war not only justifies any ruthless act of religious terrorism against the enemies of dharma or *din*, but assures honour on this earth and eternal happiness in heaven to those faithful ones who sincerely participate in the divine battle. Apparently these spiritual guarantees induce religious extremists to be more hardcore and brutal terrorists.

Meanwhile, religious terrorism functions in two different forms in India – technically organized and religio-politically motivated forms. The first category is organized in military style, and its activists are given training in modern arms to fight against the Indian state and the demonized “Others”. Technically organized terrorist groups make use of modern weapons of mass destruction to attack and destroy wide range of targets (which include the Indian military personnel, important public figures, important public and private properties, important religious symbols, and important national symbols) and modern technology to spread their religio-political propaganda. They employ various terrorist tactics (such as kidnapping, plane hijacking, random shooting in crowded places, bombing and hostage taking) for the purpose of achieving their given religio-political goal. The Sikh extremist groups (mentioned in the case study of Sikh religious terrorism) and Islamic extremist groups (named in the case study on Islamic religious terrorism) are technically organized terrorist groups. The remaining Sikh extremist group (Babar Khalsa International) and most of the

³⁶ James Turner Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions*, (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 29.

Kashmiri extremist groups are listed as terrorist organizations by the Indian government, because they are regarded as a serious threat to the Indian state and Indian public. From the beginning of the birth of religious terrorism the Indian state has been pursuing military tactics to defeat this terrorism.

The second form of religious terrorism is nurtured by Hindu religious tradition; however, it differs from the first category in certain ways. In this category too there are several militant religio-political organizations (such as RSS Sakhas, Bajrang Dal, Siv Sena and Durga Bahini) which give some sort of military training to their active members, but these militant organizations do not openly declare war against the secular Indian state (even though Hindu religio-nationalists consider secular Indian state as minority biased); instead, they employ political tactics by actively taking part in the political process to capture power in regional and national level. In the meantime, as they do not fight armed battle against the Indian state, they are not considered as a threat to the nation, therefore, they do not come under the purview of terrorist organizations like technically organized groups. These Hindu religious extremist groups tactfully manipulate both communal and political factors and opportunities to plan and execute their terrorist activities to terrorize and subjugate Muslim and Christian minorities in Hindu dominated states. Seemingly the most powerful weapons of the second type of religious terrorism are overwhelming Hindu majority and majority favouring political authorities in different levels; therefore it is not less threatening, rather it appears more dangerous than the first category.

VI.7. Conclusion

The case studies have demonstrated that in India Hindu, Muslim or Sikh religious terrorism fights battle in two fronts: on the one side it fights against Western/modern ideals of secularism, supporters of secular nationalism, and the secular Indian state; on the other it

fights against demonized “Others”. However, both the enemies are perceived to be closely related to each other (or interdependent) and equally evil because, they battle against the dharma, din or truth ordained by Brahman, Allah, or Vahiguru. According to Hindu religio-nationalists’ point of view: the secular constitution has denied the divine bestowed right of the Hindus by granting equal religious rights and privileges to the minorities, who supposedly have no loyalty or attachment to the land (India); the secular government steadfastly works for the wellbeing of the minorities and neglects the interests of the dominant majority; the given minorities, on account of their separatist agenda and proselytization activities, are enemies of India and Hindu dharma. Since the secular state safeguards the minority rights and privileges, it becomes greater enemy of Hinduism and Hindu society.³⁷ While, in the view of the Kashmiri Muslims, Sikhs and Naga Christians Indian state is both Hindu dominated and Hindu biased; it does not protect the constitutional religious rights and privileges of the minorities from the aggressive Hindu majority; therefore both are the enemies of the minorities – they are portrayed as two different manifestations of an evil force that is after the elimination of divine truth.³⁸ Hence, the above-assessed points make it obvious that each conflicting community categorizes the secular Indian state as a great enemy that unwaveringly supports, protects and pleases Muslim/Sikh/Christian minorities (as supposed by Hindus) or Hindu majority (as conceived by the minorities). Consequently, religious terrorism, in each case, has to battle against two enemy-forces simultaneously.

Furthermore, involvement of the two enemy-forces in the fight, apparently, makes the matter more serious and battle more complicated as well as indispensable for every conflicting party:

³⁷See Malik and Vajpeyi, “The Rise of Hindu Militancy,” 317; Eva Hellman, “Dynamic Hinduism: Towards a New Hindu Nation,” in *Questioning the Secular State: The Worldwide Resurgence of Religion in Politics*, edited by David Westerlund, 4th Impression (London: C. Hurst & Company, 2002), 242.

³⁸ See Chapter II for further clarification.

because of the alliance the enemies become more powerful, and pose serious threat to the concern religious community/communities. Therefore, it becomes religious obligation for all faithful ones of each given conflicting faith community to arise and fight divine battle for the sake of religious or ethno-religious identify and survival, and in the battle any form of violence is justified on the basis of religious texts and symbols. In the meantime, those who participate in the religious war are assured (implicitly or explicitly) honour in this life and eternal happiness in heaven after-life. Therefore, religious terrorism, in each case, becomes more ruthless, destructive and dangerous than any other secular militant group/groups in India. The examples of the brutality of religious terrorism are illustrated in the case studies on Sikh, Islamic and Hindu religious terrorism. This force is not only dangerous and brutal, but threatens to entirely bring down the existing socio-political structure of the secular Indian nation; therefore, it is urgent necessity to find an appropriate method to contain this phenomenon before it takes insurmountable form. For this reason the following chapter makes an effort to propose a suitable model towards the solution of the problem.

CHAPTER VII

DECONSTRUCTING RELIGIOUS TERROR: TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR RECONCILIATION AND RESOLUTION

VII.1. Introduction

Religious terrorism not only threatens the socio-political integrity of the Indian subcontinent, but appears to have the propensity to throw the whole of South Asian region into a chaotic situation for an uncertain period. Meanwhile, in spite of various tactics used by the Indian state, to subdue religious terrorism, this problem is becoming more complicated. In the post-independent Indian socio-political environment radical religious specialists seem to have better prospects to manoeuvre religious teachings and symbols mobilize their religious constituency against demonized “Others”. Moreover, it is most likely that religious conflict of any dimension can further kindle violent religious-passion of the followers of radical religious ideologies that authorize religious violence or terrorism. Therefore, it may not be possible to vanquish religious terrorism simply by using military force, and political and economic mechanisms. Rebuilding trust and close socio-religious rapport among the conflicting religious communities could be indispensable aspects in rooting out the problem of religious terrorism. Thus, in this chapter I make an effort – delving within the Indian society – to suggest practicable socio-religious solution for conflict resolution and deconstruction of religious terror. However, I do not attempt to do an exhaustive study on the field suggested here; rather I initiate a suitable model for the conflict resolution.

Arrangement of the chapter is made in the following manner. Firstly, a summery of the issues is tendered. Secondly, a framework towards conflict resolution is worked out. Then, a brief conclusion is presented.

VII.2. Summary of the Issues

From the dawn of the Indian independence the fear of losing religio-cultural or ethno-religio-cultural identity became a matter of grave concern for the Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian religious communities of the Indian society. However, the apprehension (that religio-cultural identity was in danger) was expressed, mostly by Hindus and Sikhs, from the latter half of the nineteenth century; therefore, to safeguard their religio-cultural or ethno-religio-cultural identity they started Cow Protection, *Suddhi* and *Singh Sabha* movements. The aforementioned fear was, most probably, generated by both internal and external factors. The internal aspects were factionalism, passive religious teachings (such as non-violence/*ahimsa* and tolerance)¹ and division (on caste or class basis²), which were perceived to have emasculated or weakened (as suggested by some Hindu nationalists like Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and M. S. Golwalkar)³ and distracted the religious (mainly Hindu, Sikh and Muslim) communities from a true religion revealed in the religious text/texts (such as *the Vedas* and *the Quran*) by Brahman/Allah/Guru. This might be the reason why Dayananda Saraswati⁴ and Muhammad ibn Abd-ul-Wahhab⁵ had called their respective religious community back to the

¹ In 1923 B.S. Moonje, leader of Hindu *Sabha* of the Central Princes, “advocated ‘ending the un-Vedic principle of *ahimsa*’ (dispensing vegetarianism) and rehabilitating ‘the Vedic institution of *Yajñ*’ (seen as an animal sacrifice) accustoming a Hindu to the sight of spilling blood and killing’.” Christophe Jaffrelot, “Hindu Nationalism, Strategic Syncretism in Ideology Building,” paper presented at the Conference of the British Association for South Asian Studies (Birmingham: 10-12 April, 1992), 14.

² E.g. “‘Hinduism’ is a series of social communities stratified along caste lines, with different rituals and different gods.” James Warner Bjorkman, “The Dark Side of the Force: Notes on Religion and Politics,” in *Fundamentalism, Revivalists and Violence in South Asia*, edited by James Warner Bjorkman (Maryland: The Riverdale Company, 1988), 5.

³ According to Savarkar, it was because of “self-destructive weakness and lack of confidence among Hindus” Muslims posed serious threat to Hindus. M.S. Golwalkar challenged Hindu men “to rid themselves of fear.” Golwalkar wrote: “Let us shake off the present-day emasculating notions and become real living men, bubbling with national pride, living and breathing the grand ideas of service, self-reliance and dedication in the cause of our dear and sacred motherland Today more than anything else, mother needs such men – young, intelligent, dedicated and more than all virile and masculine.” “Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 80 and 83.

⁴ See Lajpat Rai, *A History of the Arya Samaj* (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1976), 58.

⁵ See G.H.Jansen, *Militant Islam* (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1979), 92.

Vedas or the original teachings of Islam. External factors were socio-historical experiences, aim to enforce majoritarian idea (for example, attempt to enforce Hindu majoritarian idea in the whole of India, Islamic principle in Jammu and Kashmir, and *Khalsa* Sikh religious norms in Punjab), and unfavourable socio-religious and political factors.⁶ Consequently, from the beginning of the Indian independence Hindu, Sikh, Muslim and Christian religious communities had begun to battle against the aforesaid problems. On the one hand, the concerned religious leaders or religio-nationalists had to struggle for the unity within the given community and to instil masculine spirit among the members of the community; on the other, they had to defend their religion and culture from outside attacks.⁷ In such situation it was most likely for the conflicting religious communities to devise and espouse more exclusive religious strategy for the preservation of their endangered religio-cultural identity.

Meanwhile, use of exclusive religious strategy by these religious (more specifically by Hindu, Muslim and Sikh) communities for the sake of safeguarding their religio-cultural or ethno-religio-cultural identity had given rise to a culture of socio-religious antagonism, intolerance and isolation – e.g. Cow Protection and *Suddhi* movements implanted among Hindus spirit of antagonism against Christians, Muslims and Sikhs; *Singh Sabha* and *Gurdwara* Reformation movements created relationship-gap and intolerance between Sikh (*Khalsa* Sikh) community and other religious communities (mostly Hindus and non-*Khalsa* Sikhs); likewise, *Khilafat* movement, which was launched by Muslims in 1920 with a pan Islamic aspiration, further isolated Muslims from Hindus. So, exclusive religious strategy had two-fold long-lasting

⁶ See case studies for further clarifications.

⁷ According to Bjorkman, religious fundamentalists require “two enemies: one within their ranks, the other outside. Since the internal enemy might betray the “cause,” periodic purges and purifications of members become necessary; since the external enemy threatens to destroy the “cause,” ranks must consolidate.” Bjorkman, *Fundamentalism, Revivalists and Violence in South Asia*, 3.

effects in the Indian society from the pre-independent period: it bred spirit of distrust and hatred between majority and minority religious communities and it gave rise to undying communal problems – specifically between Hindu and Muslim communities.

It was Hindu-Muslim communal complications that gave birth to militant Hindu religio-nationalist organisations (such as the Hindu *Mahasabha* and the RSS) that sought to make India a Hindu *rashtra*. The failure to attain what they considered divine-created Hindus' right⁸ cultivated among religio-nationalist Hindus deep hatred not only against the religious minorities, but also against the secular parties. As a result, they employed more exclusive religious and political tactics to isolate the religious minorities and the secular political parties from Hindu mass from the early 1950s. To carry out their more exclusive religio-political design they founded Hindu nationalist political party (the *Jana Sangh*) and made a great effort to consolidate Hindu unity to mobilize wider Hindu constituency to achieve the set religio-political goal. Consequently, there came into existence the VHP and several other smaller Hindu militant/extremist groups during the following three decades (1960s to 1980s), to work for the realization of their aspiration. Meanwhile, during this period the RSS local *sakhas* were established in most of the cities and towns in India.

With the multiplication of militant Hindu organizations communal incidents against minority religious communities increased many-fold and affected many parts of India. According to the report in the *India Today*, in 1987, 250 out of 350 districts in India were affected by

⁸ Savarkar, in the following sentences, tries to communicate to every Hindu that from the time immemorial India (the pre-partitioned India) belongs to Hindu race because, before Muslims and Europeans invaded and occupied India, it was ruled by unbroken line of divine-kings (like Rama and Krishna) for *Yugas* and *Kalpas* (ages – i.e. thousands of years) – therefore, he calls all Hindus to rise up to reclaim and purge the sacred territory from foreign invaders. Savarkar writes: “The Hindu counts his years not by centuries but by cycles the Yug and the Kalpha – and amazed asks ‘O Lord of the line of Raghu [Rama], where has the kingdom of Ayodhya gone? O lord of the line of Yadu, where has Mathura gone!’” Quoted in Joseph S. Alter, “Somantic Nationalism: Indian Wrestling and Militant Hinduism,” in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (July, 1994), 563.

communal violence; whereas only 61 districts were affected in 1961.⁹ Communal violence/riots, in certain cases, were generated (e.g. during *Ekmata Yajna* and *Rathyatras* VHP and *Bajrang Dal* activists incited communal propaganda)¹⁰ by religious specialists or religious-nationalists manipulating Hindu religious symbols to serve two-fold purposes – to unite different sections and factions of Hindus and to infuse masculinity among all Hindus. The objective of the first one was to consolidate Hindu vote bank for the BJP so that the Hindu religio-nationalists' goal of making India a Hindu nation would be realized through political tactics, and the purpose of the second one was to inspire Hindu religious fanaticism and extremism to reaffirm Hindu religio-cultural identity as superior to all other religio-cultural identities and to attack the enemies of Hindu dharma in their strongholds as suggested by Dayananda Saraswati.¹¹ The second ambition of Hindu religio-nationalists made the public phase of Hinduism “increasingly exclusivist and aggressive” from the early 1980s. Some of the war-cries of “increasingly exclusivist and aggressive “Hinduism are “India belongs to Hindus only,” “the Hindu whose blood does not boil does not have blood but water”¹² and “pehele kasai, phir isai” (first the butchers/Muslims, then the Christians).¹³ These slogans could transmit two-fold messages to the Hindus: firstly, Hindu dharma and Hindu race are in great danger on account of anti-Hindu activities of Muslims and Christians; secondly, the battle against the enemies of Hinduism already began, therefore, every Hindu

⁹ *India Today* (15 June, 1987), 17 and 19; Alter, “Somantic Nationalism,” 561.

¹⁰ See Hansen, *The Saffron Wave*, 165.

¹¹ See Nandini Gooptu, “The Urban Poor and Militant Hinduism in Early Twentieth-Century Uttar Pradesh,” in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (October, 1997), 911

¹² Arvind Rajagopal, *Politics After Television: Religious Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Indian Public* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 30.

¹³ Kapil Komireddi, “India Must Face up to Hindu Terrorism,” [Article online], available from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2011/jan/19/india-hindu-terrorism-threat?INTCMP=SRCH>, Internet accessed: 15 April 2012.

has the religious obligation to take up arms and join in the battle to destroy the forces of *adharma*. This is why Sadhvi Rithambhra, said that Hindu culture and heritage tells Hindus “to answer every Ravan in the manner of Ram”¹⁴ – that is, killing of Muslims (and also Christians) is justified on the basis of the story of the battle narrated in the *Ramayana*.

Meanwhile, the aspiration of Hindu religio-nationalists to make India a Hindu *rashtra* and their use of more exclusive religio-political strategies to achieve their goal, further confirmed the fear (that ethno-religious identities might be lost in the ocean of Hinduism) of the Kashmiri, Sikh and Naga ethno-religious communities. These religious communities (particularly Nagas and Sikhs) were compelled to voice their ethno-cultural and geo-political concerns to the British government before the Indian independence,¹⁵ because of the apprehension; but they were given no other choice except to be part of Indian union. At the same time, political leaders (particularly Nehru) of the post-independent Indian state ignored the political assurances made to these minority communities.¹⁶ Therefore, from the early 1950s the Sikhs of Punjab, Nagas and Kashmiri Muslims began to pressurise the Indian state to consent to their demands – i.e. independence for Naga inhabited region, creation of Punjabi *suba* for the Sikhs of Punjab, and to grant right of self-determination to the Kashmiri people. However, the Indian government did not give a sympathetic consideration to the religious and socio-political grievances of these religious minorities. As a result, the first insurgency movement in the post-independent India began in Naga Hills in 1956. The military repressive measure, that was launched against the Naga insurgency, instead of defeating Naga militancy

¹⁴ Rajagopal, *Politics After Television*, 230.

¹⁵ See J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, revised edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 182;

¹⁶ See the case studies on Sikh, Islamic and Christian religious terrorism.

antagonised more Nagas against the Indian state and, at the same time, the military strategy confirmed Naga militants' propaganda that the numberless Indian troops were forces of Hinduism that aim to destroy Christianity.¹⁷

Furthermore, the Sikhs and Kashmiri Muslims were deeply irked due to the opposition to their religio-cultural and geo-political demands from two fronts – on the one side, opposed by political leaders,¹⁸ and on the other, by Hindu community (largely by Punjabi or Kashmiri Hindus). Such political complication might have further enraged Sikhs and Kashmiri Muslims against Hindu dominated Indian state and Hindu majority. In the already existing tense communal atmosphere any additional undesirable socio-political occurrence could have boosted the moral of radical religious elements to follow a path of violence to achieve their objectives. Nevertheless, in the 1960s and 1970s the ethno-religious minorities experienced certain positive socio-political and economic progress – e.g. Nagaland and Punjab were made full-fledged states within the Indian Union in the 1960s, the Green Revolution changed the economic and educational life of the people of Punjab, and rapid economic and educational developments were carried out in the state of Jammu and Kashmir; but, in spite of these positive achievements, socio-religious antagonism against the Indian state and Hindu majority had intensified during the period (1960s to 1970s) on account of the following factors – certain unresolved socio-political issues (such as boundary dispute, water sharing dispute,

¹⁷ For such propaganda the Naga insurgents could have exploited “the fear of many Nagas that within the Indian Union the religious freedom of a small Christian minority would be compromised.” Gordon P. Means and Ingunn N. Means, “Nagaland – The Agony of Ending a Guerrilla War,” in *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 39, No. ¾ (Autumn, 1966 – Winter, 1966-1967), 297.

¹⁸ See Chapters II & III.

language dispute, and dispute on constitutional provisions),¹⁹ and activities of increasingly exclusivist and aggressive Hinduism.

However, despite rising trend of religious and socio-political resentment between the Hindu majority and the ethno-religious minority communities the Indian society was not plagued by religious terrorism, except Naga insurgency (but the militancy problem of Naga insurgency was restricted within Naga inhabited areas in the Northeast India), till the end of 1970s. The following two factors, most probably, were responsible in preventing the rise of religious terrorism till the end of the 1970s: firstly, the Indian state maintained neutrality on religious matters, and religion was not used for political gain by the secular political parties; secondly, prominent leaders (such as Sheikh Abdullah and Sant Fateh Singh) of the Sikh and Kashmiri ethno-religious nationalist movements exerted their influence to shun path of violence, because they followed non-violence and passive resistance to achieve their set goals.²⁰

But, development of an unfavourable socio-religious and political atmosphere (in the late 1970s) opened ground for unrestrained communal politics in which religious symbols that signify war, subjugation and victory were stage-managed openly by communal parties with the aim of attaining their religio-political goals. So, unrestricted communal politics created more communal violence, further deepened religious hatred and antagonism between the Hindu majority and Muslim/Sikh/Christian minority communities, and weakened centuries old socio-cultural strands that bind together different religious groups in the Indian society. Meanwhile, on account of Mrs. Gandhi's new political strategy, to regain her popularity, the ethno-religious minorities lost whatever trust and expectation they had so long on the

¹⁹ See case studies on Sikh, Islamic and Christian Religious Terrorism.

²⁰ See case studies on Sikh and Islamic Terrorism for further clarification.

Congress party and on the secular Indian state.²¹ At the same time, due to the re-entry of religion in the public stage radical religious specialists and religio-nationalists gained prominence in their respective religious community and many of them (like Bhindranwale) replaced or superseded moderate or liberal minded ethno-nationalist leaders that advocated non-violence and passive resistance. Besides, by the early 1980s there were many Muslim/Sikh/Hindu young people who had undergone some sort of religious radicalization in *Madrassas*, *RSS Sakhas* and other Hindu militant organizations, or Sikh theological institutions. Many of these young people were well educated, well informed about the new religio-political developments around the globe due to the means of modern communication, and dissatisfied on account of the failure of the secular state to meet their religious and socio-political expectations. In such socio-religious and political atmosphere leaders of the diminishing Congress party, by managing religion for political purpose, played in the hands of radical religious elements and boosted the moral of religio-nationalists or ethno-religio-nationalists. This miscalculated political method of the Congress seems to have reinforced the already existing communal divide and religious hatred between conflicting religious communities, and strengthened radical religious elements to boldly and freely propagate their radical religious ideologies to inspire inner passion among members of their religious community to perform acts of religious terrorism for the purpose of realization of their given objectives. In the prevailing religio-socio-political environment the concept of holy war/*dharma yudh* and religious justification of violence against demonized “Others” seems to have motivated the radicalized, disgruntled and socio-politically desperate young people to follow the path of religious terrorism to achieve their religio-political goals.

²¹ For further explanation see Chapter I.

Moreover, religious terrorism, to achieve its objectives, appears to have adopted strategy of production of communal violence/riots as its most essential project – because the recurrent communal riots give a strong impression that the Indian society is prone to communal violence. This might be one of the reasons why during 1980s incidents of communal violence increased four times more than the incidence of communal violence in the preceding decades.²² Most plausible reasons behind manufacturing communal violence are: to widen relationship-gap between the conflicting communities; to consolidate unity within the concerned religious community and to mobilize or garner support in the wider circle; to demonstrate masculinity; to destroy existing social rapport in the Indian society; and to justify religious propaganda that the “Other” is perpetually evil. Religious terrorists plan and execute various “performative acts” to instigate communal violence. Some of the performative acts of religious terrorism are: destruction of centuries old religious monument like Babri Mosque; bombing religious places such as Mecca Mosque and *Ajmer Dargah Sharif*; shooting or bombing in cities and towns (like Malegaon, Mumbai, and Delhi) where multi-faith communities live together; attack on Indian Parliament; and planting bombs in the Samjhauta Express train.²³ Hence, shooting, killing, bombing, and other destructive acts of religious terrorism are performative acts, which are intended to produce wave of violence or violence of greater intensity so that the gap between “us” (those who stand on the side of truth) and “them” (those who do not conform to the set norms of truth) can be unbridgeable. So, religious terrorism seriously threatens to destroy existing socio-cultural strands that bind together different religious communities as one society in many parts of India. The game plan of this religious terrorism, most probably, is to totally demolish the existing social ethos and

²² See Manjari Katju, “The Early Vishva Hindu Parishad: 1964 to 1983,” in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 26, No. 5/6 (May-June, 1998), 56.

²³ See case study on Hindu Religious terrorism.

create a total chaos in the whole of South Asian region. Therefore, religious terrorism is much more dangerous and destructive than other (secular) extremist/militant groups in India.

The Indian state, from the early 1980s, has been fighting against this religious terrorism with its military might, political and economic mechanisms. Although the Indian state was successful in crushing the Sikh religious terrorism in 1993 with enormous costs (in terms of finance and human lives) the threat of religious terrorism began to mount from the second half of the 1980s due to the rise of Islamic and Hindu religious terrorism. From the early 1990s number and capability (technical and military capability to carry out intended acts of terrorism in any part of India) of religious terrorist groups began to expand on account of the involvement of certain external factors (i.e., infiltration of Islamic terrorist groups from Pakistan and covert support from some foreign elements). Besides, some Sikh terrorist groups (like Babar Khalsa International) escaped total elimination in 1993, and these groups have the potentiality to once again resume the earlier form. Moreover, because of the overwhelming Hindu majority Hindu-religious-terrorism, more than other groups, has the propensity to cause violence and destruction of enormous intensity and throw the Indian society into a total chaos.

VII.3. Framework towards Conflict Resolution

In the Indian society religion is the vital part that controls and conducts the given religious community, binds together different individual members and sustains unity of the religious community; therefore, religious ideologies have inner force to mobilize given religious constituency both for good cause and violent activities or religious terrorism. These two contradictory functions of religion can be termed as religious “extremism” or “militancy”. According to Appleby, both types of religious workers or volunteers (those who struggle for

the good of others and those who terrorise “others”) are termed as “extremists” or “militants”.²⁴ From ancient time religions in India have been mobilizing countless number of devotees to dedicate their lives for well-being and just cause of whole humanity without any distinction. These religious extremists (who struggle for the good of the society) have established thousands of educational institutions, health posts, hospitals, orphanages and other social welfare projects in every nook and corner of India and in some other parts of the world. They impart education to millions of young people of all religious communities; provide health facilities to numerous poor people; take care of tens of thousands of orphan, discarded children and helpless people; organize relief works in times of natural or man-made calamities; and work for establishment of peace between different conflicting communities, tribes and groups of people - for example, religious actors played significant role in resolving conflict between Hmar and Dimasa Kachari tribal groups in Assam state of Northeast India in the beginning of the 21st century.²⁵ Such religious extremists can stretch to any limit of physical suffering for the well-being of other people. Besides these, so-called, (good) “religious extremists or militants,” religions (i.e., radical religious ideologies) also inspire thousands of their devotees to take the path of religious terrorism to terrorise those who do not abide by their religious ideologies.

India is unique in both socio-religious and geographical sense. It is the land in which great saints and messengers of peace for humankind (such as Mahvira and Ramakrishna

²⁴ R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC., 2000), 10-12.

²⁵ According to Hrilrokhum Thiek, several church organizations and many church leaders took special initiative to end ethnic conflict between Dimasa Kachari and Hmar tribal groups in the beginning of the 21st century. Thiek himself was made the chairperson of the peace commission which was formed to end the violence and to re-establish friendly relationship between the two warring tribes. Most of the Dimasa Kacharis profess mixture of Hinduism and animism and Hmar tribe practices Christian faith. Personal interview with Hrilrokhum Thiek (retired Minister of Presbyterian Church in India) over the phone on 30th September 2011, at 12 noon. Thiek lives in Mulhoi village in Haflong, in North Cachar Hills District, in Assam.

Paramahansa) were born; this land, from the ancient time, has welcomed, sheltered and protected people professing and practising varieties of religious faiths – also, both persecuted (Zoroastrians or Persis) and persecutors (Muslims) found home in Indian soil²⁶ – and these people have lived as indivisible parts of the Indian society. In many Indian villages, towns and cities various religious groups are living together as close neighbours without communal tension/conflict. One can experience such beautiful sight of co-existence in various regions in India (like Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and south Indian states).

To understand how various groups of people have been co-existing in many parts of India despite their religious differences, we have to investigate underlying interconnecting socio-religious strands – e.g., certain common social conducts, common sacred space, no disregard or disrespect shown in any form to others religious faiths and practices, common saints and participation in each other's religious festivals or gatherings. Such interlinking threads might be valuable elements in rebuilding trust among the conflicting religious communities in the wider circle. But, before I examine the practicability of these socio-religious strings, that bind together different religious communities into one society, for the framework towards conflict resolution, I will briefly discuss significance of religious pluralism in the Indian society to explain an intricate relationship between the Indian society and plurality.

VII.3.1. Is Religious Plurality a Weakness or Strength of the Indian Society?

The Indian society is one of the most multicultural and pluralistic societies in the world. In the meantime, this pluralistic feature of the Indian society is not recently adopted or developed phenomenon, but many centuries old. Moreover, it was religious plurality which gifted Indian society with great saints like Dadu Dayal (1544-1603 – a Hindu-Muslim saint who inspired

²⁶ See Maurice Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda: The Ancient Religion of India* (London: Adamant Media Corporation, 2005), 10.

the formation of a sect known as Dadu Panth),²⁷ Kabir Das (1440-1518 – a Hindu-Muslim mystic poet and saint),²⁸ Sai Baba of Siridi (a Hindu saint who practiced Hindu and Muslim rituals and lived in a mosque), Guru Nanak, Ramakrishna Paramahansa (mystic saint), Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa. These great souls' religion was service to humanity and their mission was to establish justice, peace and unity among diverse religious communities. They (particularly Mahatma Gandhi) inspired many great men (such as Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela) and women all over the world to stand for justice, liberty, equality, brotherhood and peace among all mankind without any differentiation whatsoever. The Hindu reformers Ram Mohan Roy and Dayananda Saraswati too were the products of religious plurality. They were both positively and negatively motivated by Christianity and Islam to reform Hinduism and present it as a universal religion. Monotheism and iconoclasm of Christianity and Islam influenced and inspired them to take a bold step to start Hindu reformation movements to get rid of the shortcomings (such as futility of idol worship, evil side of caste system, sati system and child marriage) of the Hindu religious system. Besides, plurality has helped (directly or indirectly) to strengthen each religious community within the plurality – this is why all existing religious communities in the Indian society could preserve their original and unique religious values and norms intact even though these communities had to pass through a hostile socio-political environment (for several centuries) in the past.²⁹

Therefore, the plurality and diversity in India, to put in the words of John Hick, “is not ultimately a threat to be warded off, or an embarrassment to be studiously ignored, but a

²⁷ “Dadu”, in *Encyclopaedia Britannica 2008 Ultimate Reference Suite* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2008).

²⁸ “Kabir,” in *Colors of India* [Article online]; available from <http://www.thecolorsofindia.com/kabir/index.html>; Internet accessed: 10 July 2011.

²⁹ See Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda*, 10f.

reality of which we must seek to discover the positive meaning.”³⁰ In reality, discovering positive meaning or values in other religious faiths is not a new thing to any of the religious communities in India; it is an ongoing process for a very long time. This ongoing process requires to be enhanced further to create favourable atmosphere among the conflicting religious communities to learn to unlearn negative attitudes and perceptions accumulated from both the past and present socio-religious and political experiences towards establishment of closer relationship among conflicting communities for the good of the whole Indian society.

Furthermore, if peace and stability of a part of the society gets disturbed, then, the whole society suffers the consequence of it, because the relationship between different parts of the pluralist Indian society is very intricate. Therefore, it is imperative to maintain the equilibrium of the whole Indian society, not just a component of it. To uphold the stability in the whole Indian society it is necessary to repair the relationship gap and rebuild trust among the conflicting religious communities. In this regard underlying interconnecting socio-religious threads – that facilitate help to let the different communities co-exist, as one society, in several parts of India – can be very valuable aspects to re-establish trust among the different communities in the Indian society.

VII.3.2. Interconnecting Socio-religious Threads for Deconstruction of Religious Terror and Rebuilding of Social Harmony

To find practicable solution for the conflict resolution we have to peer into local or regional multi-religious societies that exist together as one community. One can find numerous such smaller societies in different regions in India. These societies could provide us with essential socio-religious strands that make possible for them to live together as close neighbours in-

³⁰ John Hick and Hasan Askari (eds.), *The Experience of Religious Diversity* (Aldershot: Gower Publishing Company Limited, 1985), 3.

spite of their religious differences. The following illustrations of how different religious communities participate and share in each others' religious festivals and sacred space might help us to discover some such threads which bind-together these different religious communities.

In the state of Kerala Hindus celebrate an ancient and majestic feast of Thrissur Pooram, “one of the most spectacular festivals held on the [Indian] sub-continent.”³¹ The festival is celebrated on 1st May every year. The central activity of the celebration happens in a large open space opposite of the main temple of Vadakkunnatham,³² in Trichur. On this occasion people from all over Kerala come to Trichur. Even though it is purely a Hindu festival the local Christians too respect this occasion. So, on this day the local Christians open the doors of their cathedral to well-come several thousand Hindu pilgrims, coming from all over Kerala, and prepare food for their lunch. In addition to Thrissur Pooram, there is Onam festival, which has more ecumenical character. Onam is the national festival of Kerala, and it is one of the most colourful festivals of south-east Asia. This is also annual festival which falls in August-September. Though Onam is originally Hindu harvest festival it is celebrated by all communities of Kerala. This festival lasts for four to ten days³³ and during the period of celebration whole of Kerala is untied as one community. It is because of such common socio-religious heritage Hindus, Muslims, Jews and Christians could co-exist as one people in Kerala for many centuries.

³¹ David A. Hart, *One Faith? Non-realism and the World of Faiths* (London: Mowbray, 1995), 155; “Thrissurpooram Festival;” available from <http://thrissurpooramfestival.com/>; Internet accessed: 30 July 2011.

³² Hart, *One Faith?*, 156.

³³ “What is Onam;” available from <http://www.onamfestival.org/what-is-onam.html>; Internet accessed: 30 July 2011.

In Gujarat too Hindus and Muslims used to celebrate the festival of *Makara Sankranti* (Repentant Crocodile) annually. According to Hart, in 1993 both Hindus and Muslims of Bhavnagar (Mahatma Gandhi's own university town) were flying kites together "on their roofs and participating in a common ritual of celebration" during the festival even though Hindu-Muslim communal violence had erupted in Mumbai and claimed hundreds of lives due to the destruction of the mosque in Ayodhya.³⁴ However, this socio-religious ethos suffered much damage due to the Gujarat pogrom in 2002.

In addition to the above-stated cases of participation of Christians and Muslims in Hindu festivals, few examples of many of the sacred places, which are revered as holy places by both majority and minority religious communities, will be more helpful in the framework toward conflict resolution. One of these sacred places is Christian Church (St. Mary's Basilica). St. Mary's Basilica (built in 1882) is situated in Bangalore. Main attraction of this Basilica is the St. Mary's Feast, which is celebrated in September for whole month every year.³⁵ On this occasion (all-through the month) the church is packed with people, professing different religious faiths, who come from far and wide. Most of the devotees come to pray to Mother Mary to grant their wishes. It is believed that people's wishes are granted by Mother Mary if they come into the church and pray to her. This church is one of the examples of many churches in several parts of India that are revered as holy places by the people of different religious communities.

Other examples of ecumenical pilgrimage centres are *Darga of Pir* (known in various names, such as *Darga Sharif* and *Ajmer Darga*) in Ajmer, Rajasthan, and the shrine of Usman Raina

³⁴ Hart, *One Faith?*, 159.

³⁵ "St. Mary's Basilica Bangalore," in *Bangalore Religious Places* (Bangalore) [Article online]; available from <http://www.bangaloreindia.org.uk/religious-places/st-marys-basilica.html>; Internet accessed: 30 July 2011.

in Kashmir. The *Darga of Pir* is a tomb of thirteenth century Muslim Sufi saint, Khwaja Muin-ud-din Chisti (died in 1236), of Chisti Order³⁶ The *Darga Sharif* is one of the oldest ecumenical pilgrimage centres in south-east Asia. For a long period both Muslims and Hindus³⁷ of all walks of life have been visiting and seeking blessings together at this shrine. This sacred place has been one of the targets of both Islamic and Hindu terrorists because of its ecumenical character. In 2007 a bomb blast took place at the Dargah. Initially Islamic terrorists were blamed, but later on the Indian intelligence found out that it was the handy work of Hindu religious terrorists. The main intention of the Hindu terrorists behind the bomb blast was to distract Hindus from visiting the shrine.

In the Kashmir Valley Pandits' reverence for the popular Sufi shrines is well known case.³⁸ One of these shrines, which are venerated by both Muslims and Pandits, is the shrine of Usman Raina, popularly known as Rishi Baba. The shrine is located at Panewa, in the district of Bodgam. "Not long ago," says Ishaq Khan, the residents (*Pandits* and Muslims) of the Panewa village "used to celebrate the anniversary of the Sufi saint by distributing cooked rice coloured with turmeric (tahar) among the poor."³⁹ The veneration of saints by both Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir seemed to have supported the Kashmiri social structure from being shaken by communalism or fundamentalism, in spite of the presence of varied religio-cultural dimensions, for centuries. Evidently after the rise of Islamic religious terrorism in Kashmir

³⁶ Jones, *The People of the Mosque*, 138.

³⁷ "Feel the Essence of Love of Sufi Saint Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Hasan Chisti (R.A) Ajmer," in *Dargah Ajmer Sharif*; available from <http://www.dargahajmersharif.com/>; <http://www.justindia.info/india/ajmer-khwaja.asp>; Internet accessed: 31 July 2011.

³⁸ Mohammad Ishaq Khan, "The Rishi Tradition and the Construction of Kashmiriyat," in *Lived Islam in South Asia: Adaptation, Accommodation & Conflict*, edited by Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2004), 64.

³⁹ Khan, "The Rishi Tradition and the Construction of Kashmiriyat," 64.

this shared social construction has been upset to a great degree and a sharp communal divide has been nourished between the conflicting communities in the wider circle.

Besides, there are several other Sufi shrines (*dargas*) scattered all over India. Although those shrines may not be nationally or internationally popular as the *Darga Sharif*, many of them attract devotees, from both Muslim and Hindu communities, of the surrounding areas. Besides Sufi tombs, living Sufi saints too are respected by both Muslims and Hindus in some parts of India – particularly in Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts of Assam (in North-east India).

Furthermore, the close social relationship between the Assamese Hindus and Assamese Muslims in Assam is worth mentioning here – both the communities have common language and culture. The Assamese Muslims are closer to Assamese Hindus than to their Bengali Muslim brethren in Assam.⁴⁰ On account of the close cultural tie between the two Assamese religious communities hardly any incidence of communal clash takes place between them, although there has been frequent violence against non-Assamese Muslims in Assam from the 1970s. Acceptance, recognition and mutual respect seem to be the major underlying factors for the development of such close socio-cultural relationship between the two faith communities. Both the communities accept one another as Assamese brothers and sisters, and they recognize and respect each other's religious beliefs and practices, therefore, communal issues do not come between their relationships. Consequently, the communal conflicts that occur outside their society have not been able to affect the bond between the two communities.

⁴⁰ See B. P. Singh, "North-East India: Demography, Culture and Identity Crisis," in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1987), 276.

The above-given examples disclose some of the interconnecting strings that have helped different religious communities to co-exist together in many parts of India. These strands are acceptance, recognition, mutual respect and good will to each others' culture, participation in others' social and religious occasions and places, principle and practice of common brotherhood, and respect to others' approach of religious beliefs and practice systems. These threads tie together different sections of the given society and make it one individual whole. Some of these societies (such as Malayali and Assamese societies) appear to be shock-proof because of their close socio-cultural connectedness with one another for a long period of time, and this close relationship seems to have attained its maturity for which no outside factors can easily breach even a small gap between them – even if a gap is created they can quickly fill it up. Such maturity, besides the afore-mentioned underlying threads, involves open-mindedness and non-judgmental attitude – the first one makes people always considerate to other people no matter what, and second one avoids destructive criticism of other religious groups/communities. Open-mindedness and non-judgemental attitude help these societies scrutinize and say no to any kind of communal factor or rumour. In India communal forces often attempt to circulate rumour against, so-called, “Others,” and such rumour may take the form of a wild fire and create communal frenzy and destroy or weaken those interconnecting social strands (e.g. Gujarat riot separated the two co-existing communities wide apart). Nevertheless, the Malayali and Assamese societies have not been affected by any kind of communal propagandists' method to create division in those societies so long. These mature co-existing pluralistic societies could be the best model of “unity in the midst of diversity,” common political slogan in India.

Besides, the Indian history (which strictly excludes conceived and reconstructed Hindu history) might supply additional materials for re-establishment of confidence and brotherhood

among the conflicting communities. Before the present religious/communal violence took birth (in the latter half of the 19th century) diverse religious groups existed-together for many centuries in various parts of the Indian soil. In this area further research needs to be done to discover valid historical-elements that facilitated peaceful co-existence of different religious groups, communities and factions for centuries.

However, religious terrorism, through spreading radical religious ideologies and religious violence, is trying to utterly destroy the above-given interconnecting strands to create deeper and wider gap among different religious communities of the Indian society. The evil design of religious terrorism threatens both the foundation and integration of the secular Indian state and Indian society. But, recent Indian Parliament and State Legislative Assembly elections (in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh) proved that large majority of the Indian public is against religious terrorism, therefore, they voted secular parties to power. If this large chunk of the Indian society (which opposes and counters religious nationalism and religious terrorism through political procedure) and the secular political parties work collectively they can exploit and preserve these valuable socio-religious aspects for restoration of trust among the conflicting communities in the wider circle. To re-establish harmonious and better Indian society and to safeguard the Indian secular democracy all secular minded political leaders and positive and constructive thinking intellectuals of all religious communities and regional societies might need to work in one accord.

If mutual trust between majority and minority religious communities is rebuilt, religious terrorism will lose its support base and may gradually die a natural death. Unless its roots are eliminated the problem of religious terrorism is very likely to become more challenging and destructive.

VII.4. Framework for Reconciliation and Resolution

On the basis of the case studies (including the study in this chapter) I make the following suggestions as a framework for reconciliation and conflict resolution:

1. The present religious antagonism and communal/religious violence among the conflicting communities is recent development, compared to the period of time these different religious groups had lived together as one society. Therefore, the socio-historical facts – on how the various faith groups could live together for a long period of time without any serious problem – could provide credible material for reconciliation and restoration of trust among the conflicting communities. In this regard it is imperative to do unbiased research on the historical facts applying authentic socio-historical methods. Hence, the Indian government (without any delay) has to entrust the responsibility (to do the research) on unbiased or unprejudiced scholars.
2. A relentless effort has to be made (by the Indian government, secular political parties and non-communal public or private agencies) to constantly update the Indian public (the findings of the scholars) through various means and methods – such as education (in educational institutions), organized public speeches, public awareness campaign and public debates. The general awareness of the socio-historical facts might be effective in rebuilding trust among the conflicting communities.
3. The Indian government has to introduce religious education as a compulsory subject (in all educational institutions – beginning from the primary to higher level – all-over India) to teach good moral values of all world religions to cultivate positive thinking in the minds of all young people. Religious education might implant love for all religious faiths among the young generation Indian mass, and they might not be misled by communal elements.

4. Secular political parties (both leaders and members) have to take a strict measure to stop using religion or religious imageries for their political end. Apparently use of religion for political purpose by secular party/parties only widens the gap among the conflicting communities and further boosts the moral of communal forces. Therefore, all secular parties should have to adopt strict guidelines, for every member of each party, to totally restrict use of religion or religious imagery for political gain.

5. The Indian state has to adopt and implement a stringent legal system to contain any form of communal violence and communal propaganda (such as constructed Hindu history) that threatens to jeopardize communal harmony or widen the gap between the conflicting communities in India. Meanwhile, all (past and present) perpetrators of communal violence be prosecuted and be punished severely.

6. The Indian state, secular political parties and all non-communal intellectuals and people of India have to work together to launch a concrete scheme for regular social interaction between conflicting communities (in different levels – village, local, district, regional and national), mainly in those areas where communal forces are strong – in social interactions importance and value of socio-historical factors and the above-discussed interconnecting social facts be given more emphasis.

VII.5. Conclusion

The preceding chapters have explained that religious terrorism in India is the by-product of deep religious antagonism on account of unfavourable socio-historical factors and political situation. This religious force, in spite of various preventive measures employed by the Indian state, is expanding its support-base by applying various religio-political tactics and communal schemes to widen relationship-gap among the conflicting communities. Moreover, religious and political environment, in the post-independent period, became more promising ground for

radical religious specialists to inspire and mobilize their religious constituencies to achieve their set religio-political goals. The main religio-political goal of each concerned party seems to be reassertion of absolute supremacy of Hindu, Islamic, Sikh or Christian religious tradition within the specific geo-political territory.

Therefore, the problem of religious terrorism is a grave concern not only for Indian state, but for whole of South Asia. More than three decades of terrorist violence has made it evident that this force cannot be vanquished by military machineries or political or economic strategies. To root out this problem it is necessary to destroy its support-base, and to demolish its support-base trust between the conflicting communities needs to be re-established. Therefore, an effort is made in this chapter to propose a practicable model based on the examples of several co-existing pluralist societies – some of them are assessed above. Meanwhile, unadulterated historical factors, if explored with valid and unbiased historical methods and intentions, could provide additional help in rebuilding confidence among various religious societies in India. As it is not intended to do a comprehensive study on the co-existing pluralist societies and their underlying historical factors in this thesis, the subject requires an urgent in-depth study for the enhancement of information in the area.

CONCLUSION

Each conflicting religion is an embodiment of both violent and non-violent symbols. These contradictory aspects portray double phases – love and violence – of each religion. Because of these dual characteristics it is evident that Sikhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity can motivate extreme love or extreme hostility –either inspire people, like Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa, to “perform the greatest acts of love and compassion” and resist violence with non-violence no matter what; or, instigate, so-called, faithful ones to massacre and terrorise people “in the name of God or justice” or the holy.¹ Furthermore, non-violent symbols provide constructive ground for peace-building in any hostile environment, whereas violent symbols can be manipulated by radical teachers and preachers to justify acts of violence in the name of divinity.

Both phases of religion are fully exhibited by the devotees of each conflicting religious faith. From antiquity these religions have produced millions of diehard devotees who cross any extremity to establish peace, love, justice and brotherhood among all Indians, excluding none. Works of such good religious extremists are clearly noticeable in every nook and corner of India. At the same time, there are many radical devotees who display violent face of religion to go beyond other extremity. Radical religious followers and practitioners of the conflicting religious communities stage-manage violent phase of each religion to justify religious violence or motivate religious terror against, so-called, enemies of dharma or religion. These religious extremists threaten to utterly destroy the existing communal harmony by disturbing age-old peace, mutual-love and brotherhood between the Hindu majority and Muslim-Christian-Sikh minorities. They constantly teach and propagate the message of hatred,

¹ See Susanne Heine, “Love or Violence? The Double Face of Religion”, Paper presented in Birmingham Symposium in honour of Frances Young (22 September, 2005).

violence and intolerance through various means and methods. Religious violence/terrorism appears to be one of the essential religious obligations for these radical religious extremists. Hence, religious terrorism is not only the medium of demonstration of their religiosity, but it is a mandatory part of religion for the religious radicals of each conflicting communities. This might be the reason why religious actors of the conflicting communities explicitly and actively manoeuvre religious texts and symbols to motivate ruthless religious violence against innocent people, women, children, disabled, old and even dead bodies (incidents of religious violence in Haryana, Gujarat and Orissa confirm this view).

Evidently primary objective of Sikh, Hindu and Islamic religious terrorism is reaffirmation and reestablishment of absolute supremacy of the concerned religious tradition within the given geographical boundaries that is considered to be divine bestowed land for the given (e.g. Punjab for Sikhs, Kashmir for Muslims, and India for Hindus) religious community. Apparently it is not possible to achieve this goal without eliminating or fully subjugating the “Others” who do not conform or surrender to set religious norms of the, so-called, superior or only true religion. These “Others” are conceived as forces of evil that aim to destroy the (claimed) divine-revealed truth; therefore, time and again the slogan Sikhism/Islam/Hinduism/Christianity in danger is raised to mobilize the concerned religious constituency for *dharma yudh* or holy war. Meanwhile, in the holy battle against the conceived enemies any form of violence is sanctioned religious justification; because the enemies, according to the religious understanding of the radicals, have forfeited the right of existence within the given holy territory. Moreover, religious terrorism demonizes entire religious community/communities that do not agree with the given religious principles; therefore, it attempts to vilify, humiliate, terrorise and systematically annihilate the whole religious community applying various religio-political tactics. Since the entire religious

community represents forces of evil, every individual member of the community becomes evil; for which no mercy is shown to even disabled, pregnant women or small children. The religious concept that “Other” is evil (and after the destruction of divine truth) makes religious terrorism more ruthless than any other terrorism; therefore, it crosses any human limits in its terrorist activities. In the meantime, the so-called holy warriors/terrorists are assured honour in this life and eternal happiness afterlife for their participation in the religious war, for which they seem to feel no remorse for their inhuman violent activities.

In India religious terrorism utilizes various strategies to achieve its goal. Some of its tactics are: blending of sacred and secular together and giving religious connotation to the secular aspects to activate and mobilize its religious constituency for holy war; taking part in political process to capture political power in states and national levels; employing crude method of religious violence as well as modern arms and technology to terrorise and destroy the targeted enemies; and instigation of communal violence to destroy the socio-religious strands that bind together different religious communities in the Indian society. Besides enemy religious communities, these schemes are applied to attack the very foundation of Indian secular democracy. This is why religious terrorism is a serious threat to the unity and integrity of the Indian nation.

However, it seems that only a fraction of followers of each conflicting community are involved in the acts of religious terrorism. This is why – in spite of almost three decades of violent activities of religious terrorism – the Indian secular democracy is functioning (in more or less normal way or far better than any of India’s contemporaries) till now. In the meantime, it appears that the larger section of the Indian society has not yet been affected by the religious terror so far. Evidently there are enumerable societies (in various parts of the country) that have been coexisting as one community for decades (or for centuries) in spite of

their religious differences. Nevertheless, the destructive power of religious terrorism cannot be underestimated (although only a fraction of the people are involved in it) because, the terrorism is not declining but it is gradually expanding its support base in many parts of the country. If the destructive force continues to enlarge its support base, then, in the near future it might create a total chaos not only in the subcontinent, but in the whole of South Asia.

The problem of religious terrorism is like a cancerous tumour that needs to be operated without delay. Therefore, to safeguard social harmony, secular and democratic values and integrity of Indian nation, it is an urgent obligation for all the leaders of secular political parties, constructive thinking leaders of all religions and regions to work together from all levels to restore trust of the minorities in the secular Indian state and to create neighbourly ethos among conflicting religious communities by inspiring mutual respect to each other.

Appendices

1. Since the 1970s a religious revival has taken place not only in Islam, but also in other religions – Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Sikhism – all through the world. According to Harvey Cox, Pope John Paul II's visit to Mexico City, one of the most secular cities, on 26 January 1979, marked the “resurgence of traditional religion in the world,” and “this resurgence has an undeniable – if still indeterminate – political significance.” (Cox, Harvey. *Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theology* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1984), 14).

“The global resurgence of religious ideas and social movements,” observes Scott M. Thomas, “is one of the most unexpected events at the end of the Twentieth Century” (Scott Thomas, “Religion and International Society,” in *Religion, Globalisation and Political Culture in Third World*, edited by Jeff Haynes (New Yourk: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 28). Worldwide religious resurgence is clearly visible picture of religion's entry into politics of different countries of the world. It is happening in countries with different religious traditions and different stage of economic, social and educational developments. According to Scott Thomas there are two reasons for the global revival of religion: firstly, the “resurgence of religion is part of the larger crisis of modernity”; and secondly, it “is the result of the failure of the modernising, secular state to produce both democracy and development in the Third World (Thomas, “Religion and International Society,” 28). On the one hand rapid modernisation has caused social and personal dislocation in a traditional society and on the other hand the Third World secular states are unable to provide employment or other financial benefits to large and growing number of educated youths and, at the same time, the political institutions are misused by some political leaders for their own political gain. The dislocation increased the human needs (social, political, religious, economic, etc.), which the Third World

secular states drastically failed to meet. In such situation religious fundamentalism would reinforce and redefine communal identity that was shaken or destroyed by the dislocation (Jonathan Fox, "Towards a Dynamic Theory of Ethno-religious Conflict," in *Nations and Nationalism* Vol. 5, No. 4 (1999), 437).

2. Islamic revolution in Iran was one of the most unexpected phenomena to happen to the Western world. The most shocking aspect of the Iranian Revolution was that the Islamic government, led by Islamic cleric Ayatollah Khomeini, took over the administrative authority of the country by overthrowing the Western-backed secular minded Shah who "was supported by a powerful, loyal army and by a network of secret police" (Misagh Parsa, *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 1). Before the fall of the Shah's Regime, Western governments and intellectuals regarded Iran "an Island of stability' in a most violent and volatile region" (Mohamed Heikal, *The Return of the Ayatolla: The Iranian Revolution from Mossadeq to Khomeini* (London: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1981), 9). Since it was one of the most rapidly industrialized countries in the Third World, it gave the impression that the Shah's Regime, through the process of industrialization, had brought prosperity to the citizens (Parsa, *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution*, 2); hence, Westerners supposed that the nation "would become increasingly secular in outlook and would begin to restrict any remaining religious beliefs to their personal lives" (Richard T. Antoun and Mary Eliane Hegland (eds), *Religious Resurgence: Contemporary Cases in Islam, Christianity and Judaism*, 1st edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 1). Yet all the efforts of Shah to secularize and modernize Iran through industrialization could not save him and his government from the sudden downfall at the hand of religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini, who led the Iranian Revolution. Since the fall of Shah, Iranian politics has been dominated by Islam. Though the Iranian Revolution was a

political one, it was *Shiism* that provided the required unity, sustenance of the revolution, and hope to accomplish the political aspiration of the people although they had different ideologies and belonged to different religious groups (beside *Shia* Muslims there were other religious minority groups). *Shia* ideology “was all the more effective as a revolutionary ideology and ethos because it does not recognize a distinction between political and religious effort, nor does it regard political as outside the realm of religious concern” (Mary Eliane Hegland, “Islamic Revival or Political and Cultural Revolution: An Iranian Case Study,” in the *Contemporary Cases in Islam, Christianity and Judaism* (1987), 194). The *Shia* religious symbols and their theological interpretation are some of the most important aspects of *Shia* revolutionary ideology.

Martyrdom of the rightful heirs of Prophet Muhammad and return of hidden Imam are the two most important revolutionary symbols of *Shiism*. In the opinion of Misagh Parsa, particularly “the story of Husayn’s willing martyrdom in the just cause of resisting the usurper caliph, Yazid, inspired devout Shiites to continue their opposition against the Shah in the face of repression and death” (Parsa, *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution*, 9). According to the teachings of the *Shia* Islam Ali, cousin brother and son-in-law of the prophet, and Ali’s son Hussein were the true successors or *khalifas* of Muhammad, and other *khalifas* were the usurpers.

At the same time the Islamic clerics played an important role in the mobilization of revolutionary activists against the Shah regime and in carrying out of their collective actions. The clerics could provide “leadership, networks, and symbols of communication” for the revolution. Thus, “a segment of the Islamic clergy gained ascendancy within the opposition

and was eventually able to establish a theocracy” (Parsa, *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution*, 2) in Iran.

Although the Iranian Revolution was entirely restricted within the borders of Iran, it struck a hard blow to the secularization process that had been considered unbeatable and irreversible, and disproved the hypothesis of the social scientists that religion would die out or pass into oblivion gradually with the advent of industrial society. Instead the Shiite-led Iranian Revolution has demonstrated that the resurgence of political Islam is to be reckoned by the world as a potent religious force.

The religio-political resurgence of Islamism was not restricted to Iran alone, but it has swept across the Sunni Muslim world too. Even the most secular Muslim majority nation, Turkey, is not left untouched by Islamic resurgence. Due to this resurgence, “powerful Islamist parties foment revolution or threaten political stability” David Little and Scott Appleby, “A Moment of Opportunity? The Promise of Religious Peacebuilding in an Era of Religious and Ethnic Conflict,” in *Religion and Peacebuilding*, edited by Harold and Gordon Smith (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 1) of some Muslim majority nations, like Algeria, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nigeria, Sudan, Egypt and Indonesia. To the orthodox Islamist parties “in any country where the majority of the population is Muslim, politics means Islamic politics: if the politics are secular then the country cannot be called truly Muslim” (G.H. Jansen, *Militant Islam* (London: Pn Books Ltd., 1979), 18). According to the orthodox Islamic teaching the *sharia* law must govern the Muslim community (the community of Allah and his apostle), and the nation which has Muslim majority (using majority might) must establish the Islamic law as its governing principles – in such a case other religious minorities have no other choice but to accept and abide by the *sharia* law.

The resurgence of Islam has given rise to radical Islam, which arguably threatens not only the stability of Muslim nations, but the whole world. This form of Islam breeds an Islamic nationalism that is anti-West, hostile to secular ideologies and culture, and also opposed to non-Islamic cultures and traditions. Islamic militants, the so-called army of God/Allah, get inspiration and nourishment from radical Islam and its theological ideologies.

3. The *Damdami Taksal* was founded, in around 1757, by Baba Deep Singh, one of the greatest Sikh heroes (a scholar and a martyr) during the time the Afghan Ahmad Shah Abdali ruled the Punjab. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale was sent to *Damdami Taksal* at the age of seven by his father to learn the profession of preaching. Later on Bhindranwale became a dominant figure in the institution, and became the favourite of Kartar Singh, the head of the institution. After the death of Kartar Singh he, at the age thirty, became the 14th head of the *Damdami Taksal*.

4. Originally invented relationship is defined by Tremblay in the following way: “Accommodating a distinct Kashmiri identity was the Indian Constituent Assembly’s guiding principle in 1950 when it approved Jammu and Kashmir’s unique and asymmetric constitutional relationship with India through Article 370 of the Constitution. This Constitutional provision created a special status for the state, unlike any other state in the Indian federation. In addition, the provision reaffirmed the ‘state-subject requirements’ whereby state employment and ownership of property were to remain the exclusive prerogatives of citizens of Jammu & Kashmir.” “Through various constitutional categories,” writes Tremblay, “the Indian state simultaneously both embraced and denied its differences from Kashmiri society. Although India recognized the Kashmiri people’s distinct cultural identity in the form of Kashmiriyat, it also asserted that the similarities between Kashmir and

the Indian state were based on their common secular, socialist, and democratic agendas.” [See Tremblay, “Kashmir’s Secessionist Movement Resurfaces,” 928-930.]

5. Globalization is a process of integration and development of global economy through global trade and commerce. Though the early history of globalization could be traced back to the beginning of modern colonialism, the present process of globalization is recent global phenomenon. According to Fahrang Rajaei, it is a “new creation,” the beginning of which was heralded by the collapse of Soviet Union, the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, indicating end of exclusive religiosity and theocracy, and birth of the World Wide Web introducing new information mode of production. Together these changes represent the inner change of ideology and material that establish the process of globalization (See Fahrang Rajaei, *Globalization on Trial: The Human Condition and the Information Civilization* [Ottawa: International Development Centre, 2000]). The most noticeable aspect of the globalization is “the control of culture” and its production (See “Globalization,” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica 2008 Ultimate Reference Suite* [Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2008]). The global popular culture can infiltrate through any geographical boundary, and any effort by a nation to exclude this culture makes the prohibited objects of the culture more irresistible. The products of the global pop culture are pop music, videos, films, fast food, entertainment items, beverages, decoration items, fashion, comics and equipments for exercises (“Globalization,” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica 2008 Ultimate Reference*). These commodities are related to life style experienced by the young people, and are obtainable through the internet system by breaching the import restriction and the computer security system of any nation.

Globalization poses a serious threat to traditional cultures and socio-historical set-up by spreading “Western imagery and culture as a new form of imperialism, cultural imperialism, which was more insidious and more effective in cementing the dependency of the post-

colonial periphery than the fiscal crudities of earlier decades,” through “late modernity, cultural flow and information technology.” (Peter Golding and Phil Harris, eds., *Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Globalization, Communication and the New International Order* [London: Sage Publications, 1997], 4). Hans Opschoor says, “Globalisation and modernisation may pose threats to ethnic and religious diversity and thus also to social cohesion and stability.” (Thomas Pogge, “Recognized and Violated by International Law: The Human Rights of the Global Poor,” in Religion, *International Relations and Development Cooperation*, edited by Berma Klein Goldewijk [Wageningen: Wageningen Academic Publishers, 2007], 88). Western culture has invaded the international electronic media threatening to influence the minds of information-hungry multitudes.

Furthermore, globalization undermines “the principle of territoriality at various” levels (Jose Casanova, “Religion, the New Millennium, and Globalization,” in *Sociology of Religion*, vol. 62, no. 4 [Winter, 2001], 424-425) and it universalizes and globalizes human rights by de-territorializing state or region-based “jurisdiction,” that means an individual human being “is the carrier of inalienable rights, and freedom of conscience is the most sacred of these personal rights” (Casanova, “Religion, the New Millennium, and Globalization,” 424-425). So, one of the most important effects of globalization is “de-territorialization,” meaning “the disembeddedness of cultural phenomena from their natural territories” (Casanova, “Religion, the New Millennium, and Globalization,” 424-425).

6. Sati “came to be used to denote a practice of self immolation that is quite dissimilar to that embarked upon by the Sati of Daksha/Shiva legend. One of the earliest versions of the story in which Sati self-destructs (she does not die in the *Mahabharata* version) contained in the *Vayu Purana* (30:38-47), the bulk of which was composed sometimes during the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. The Purana leaves vague the exact manner of Sati’s self-destruction

(broken heart? Yoga?), but the poet Kalidasa specifies in his *Kumarasambhava* that she threw herself into fire.”

7. *Puranas* are the religious texts “that treat in encyclopaedic manner the myths, legends, and genealogies of gods, heroes, and saints.” There are traditionally eighteen major (and eighteen minor) *puranas*. The *puranas* are closely connected with the epics (the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*), and together “became the scriptures of the common people; they were available to everybody, including women and members of the lowest order of society (sudras), and were not, like the Vedas, restricted to initiated men of the three higher orders [*Brahman*, *Kshtriya* and *Vaishya*]. The origin of much of their contents may be non-Brahmanic, but they were accepted and adapted by the Brahmans, who thus brought new elements into their orthodox religion.”

“The tendency toward pantheism increased in Puranic Hinduism and led to a kind of theism that exalted several supreme gods who were not prominently represented in the Vedic corpus, while many of the Vedic gods disappeared or were greatly diminished in stature.” In the meantime, the Puranic Hinduism gave importance to idol worship, *bhakti* (personal devotion to *Istha* [family or personal] deity) and pilgrimage.

8. Originally, the purification ritual of *Shuddhi* served to restore to their status persons of high castes who had been polluted. It was reinterpreted by Dayananda as a method of reconversion of those Hindus who were converted to other religions. *Shuddhi* could now be projected not only as a strategy of conversion but also as a kind of pre-emptive strike against the threat of Christian missionary conversions of low cast groups.

9. Prabhakara writes: “The undeniable historical fact underlying this idea of ‘restoration of sovereignty’ as against the ‘demand for sovereignty’ is that beginning with the British

annexation of Assam following the defeat of Burma in 1826 in the First Anglo-Burmese War, the colonial government had embarked on consolidating the boundary of these newly acquired vast territories. The annexation process was neither painless nor fair; nor even conclusive, the last most evident in the description of some of the ‘new’ territories in the old maps as ‘excluded,’ ‘partially excluded,’ and ‘unadministered’ areas.”

10. The following statements affirm the good works of the Christian Missionaries among the Nagas: “The propagation of Christianity by the American Missionaries along with the imparting of education by opening missionary schools gave the greatest contribution to the rising of the Naga society. It was through them that the heathen Nagas learned of the existence of the Absolute Reality and the better way of living. Nagas could comprehend meaning life has and they won’t anymore part with it. They now felt blessed though endless hurdles remained. Nagas would be forever grateful to them.”

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